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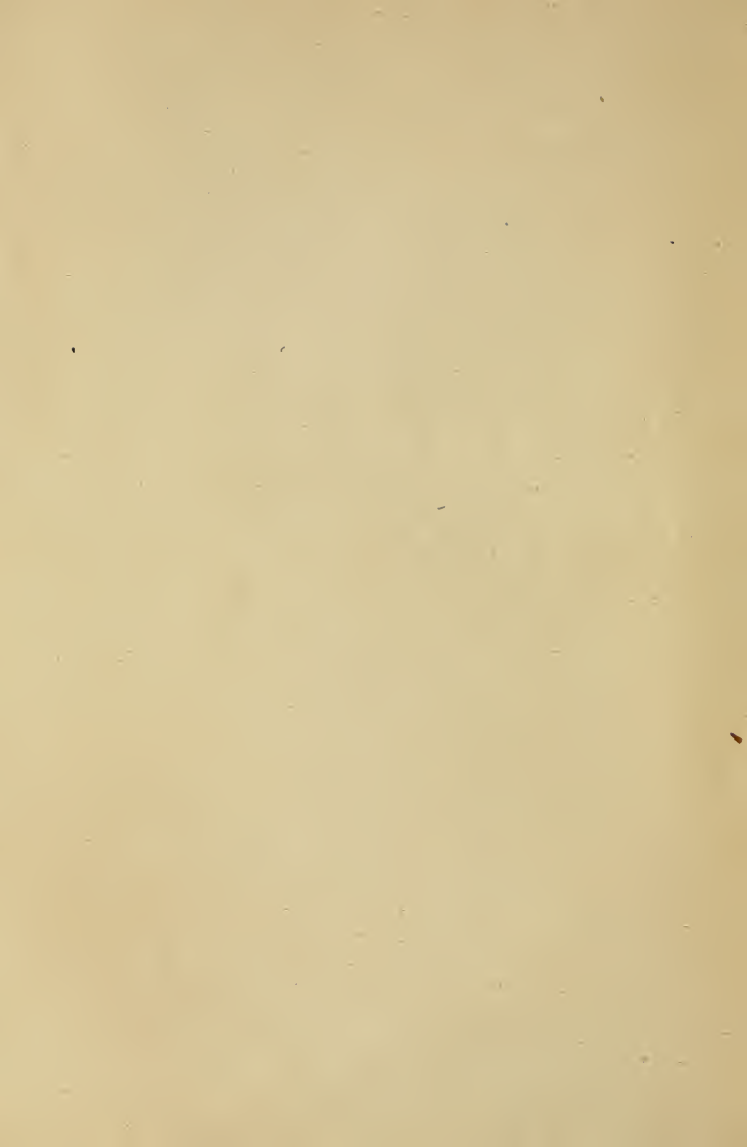
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# "THESE LITTLE ONES."

WHAT GOD HAS COMMANDED TOUCHING THEIR  
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND WHAT HE HAS  
GRACIOUSLY PROMISED CONCERN-  
ING THEIR SALVATION.

BY THE  
REV. WILLIAM SCRIBNER,

Author of

"PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN," "PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT."

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# Dedication.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MY SAINTED BROTHER,

CHARLES SCRIBNER,

NO LESS TENDERLY BELOVED NOW

THAN WHEN

HE WAS PRESENT WITH US.



## PREFACE.

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WITHIN the last twenty years the mind of our ministers and people has been much exercised on the subject of the church relations of the children of the covenant, and it has received no little attention. That the general and growing attention given to the subject has resulted in great good no one can question.

It will doubtless, however, be freely admitted that we still see evidences and signs of the forgetfulness, the ignoring or the disowning of infant church membership and of God's precious covenant-promise to parents in relation to their children. Multitudes who would by no means surrender infant baptism are unable to say exactly why the infants of church members are baptized. Sabbath-school children whose parents are professors of religion hear never a word from their superin-

tendents and teachers by way of instructing them concerning their covenant relations and covenant duties. Thousands of professors, and we know not how many pastors, are too well satisfied to have Sabbath-school teachers do the whole work of religiously instructing the children of the Church. Books are written on the conversion of children in which the subject does not have even the slightest mention. Committees consisting of ministers are often appointed by presbyteries to visit the churches within their bounds in order to warm up these cold churches, without receiving from the presbyteries any instruction to present the subject of the relation of the baptized children to the church, and to warn parents not to neglect covenant promises and covenant training and education. Conventions of elders and other convocations are held to consider how revivals may be brought on, in which not a word is breathed as to the need or the methods of arousing churches and Christians on this subject. And when the children of professors become communicants, it is frequently the case that the people have



no other idea than that these children "join the church" just as adults join it when they are baptized. It is believed, therefore, that the necessity for the continued discussion of this subject is not yet superseded.

The subject handled in the first chapter is the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son in reference to the salvation of Christ's people, since it is this which lays the foundation of the covenant of grace, of which God and his people are the parties, and which covenant, when it is *externally* and *visibly* enacted, includes their children.

Our sole argument for the church membership of the children of professing Christians is the one derived from the fact that the children of God's people were by divine command included in the Church under the old dispensation. All the Jews of the old dispensation were professors of the true religion and constituted the visible Church, considered as a spiritual society, and yet their children were included in it by God's command. This is the broad and enduring basis of infant church membership.

The last chapter of the book discusses the promise which God makes to faithful parents that their children shall be saved. We would especially call attention to this chapter.

It is deeply to be regretted that many Christians think and speak of God's plan of redemption, of their own salvation, and of the salvation of their children, without having present to their minds the ideas expressed by the word "covenant." The reason is that the word itself has been so much laid aside. The Scriptures represent the plan of salvation under the form of a covenant. They constantly use that word with reference to it. They also teach that every soul that is saved at all is saved by covenant, and that our children are saved by covenant. Christians should be just as familiar with the word "covenant" as they are with the words "grace," "throne of grace," "heirs of the promise," "kingdom of God," "redemption," "precious faith," etc. It would seem as if the word were very dear to the Holy Spirit, so frequently does he use it in the Bible. What is the

basis of church membership but the covenant of grace which Christ condescends to make with his people? To be regarded as within the covenant and to be recognized as a member of the Church are the same thing. Let us, then, hold on to the word if we would not lose sight of the truths expressed by it.

One word more. In regard to the subject of the church membership of the infants of believers, the question is not whether the recognition and treatment of them as members would be attended with evils or not, but the question is, What has God commanded? Let us search the Scriptures to ascertain what God requires of us; then let us obey him, whatever may be our fears as to the evil consequences which may flow from our obedience.



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# THESE LITTLE ONES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ETERNAL COVENANT BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON.

WE assume that it is the belief of our readers that the death of the infinitely holy and innocent Redeemer was a real endurance of the penalty of the law; in other words, that the Son of God was substituted in our place, that our sins were charged to his account, and that he was punished in our room and stead. Now, there could be no such thing as his being substituted in the place of all his people without his being substituted in the place of each of them. Each believer may feel that the blessed Saviour took *his* place as truly as if he were the only one in the universe to be redeemed.

The language of the Bible is, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being

made a curse for us ;” “ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” These assurances do not mean that Christ obeyed and suffered for the company of his people in general only, and not for each of them in particular. They speak to each one as an individual who has faith, and say to him, “ Christ was made a curse for *thee*, took *thy* place and was punished for *thee* ; his own self bare *thy* sins, suffered the penalty which *thou* deservedst to suffer.” It is thus we are to understand the two passages quoted above, and also a multitude of similar ones ; as, “ He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ;” “ Christ died for us ;” “ Christ died for our sins ;” “ The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep ;” “ He is the propitiation for our sins,” etc.

The blessed Redeemer, then, in obeying and suffering represented us, acted as our substitute—that is, as the substitute of *each* of his people. But his substitution in our place in order that he might himself render a satisfaction to the law would not have availed unless the Father, the supreme authority, had consented to the adoption of the plan.



Without the approbation and sanction of the infinite Judge such a procedure as that of the substitution of an innocent victim in the place of the guilty criminal would clearly have had no validity.

Equally true is it that such a procedure would have been an act of the highest injustice without the free consent of the one whom it was proposed to substitute in the sinner's place.

What are we to infer, then, when we learn that the substitution was a thing of actual occurrence—that Christ, the holy One, actually died as our substitute? Are we not to infer that both the Father and the Son did in truth consent to the arrangement—that the sanction of the supreme Judge was really given, and also that the Son himself freely consented to being made our substitute? In short, are we not to infer that in the counsels of eternity there was intercommunion between the Persons of the Godhead, in which each signified his concurrence and agreement to the arrangement? Evidently we are shut up to this inference, and we readily see that in such an agreement the parties go far toward contracting a covenant. Only one thing more

is needed to make the agreement a complete covenant.

That one thing is that the Father should stipulate to reward his Son on condition of his dying as our representative and substitute. If the Father freely delivered up his only-begotten Son to die in our place, and if the Son freely consented to be delivered up to die in our room and stead, and if, in addition to this, the Father promised to reward his Son for enduring the penalty of the law that we might escape,—then here we have all the characteristics of a covenant.

Now, the Scriptures not only declare that God did sincerely consent to his Son dying (himself, indeed, laying on his Son our iniquities), and that the Son came with delight to do his Father's will in the matter, but they declare that the Father stipulated to recompense, and that he has already begun to recompense, his Son for dying. They teach, moreover, what that recompense or reward was to be. The Redeemer was to be rewarded (the Scriptures teach) by seeing the eternal happiness, blessedness and glory of those in whose place he should die and for whom he should work out a righteousness. The heart

of the blessed Son of God was set on seeing the salvation of his people, loved by him from eternity; and it is as if the Father said to him, "Their salvation you shall see, provided you be actually substituted in their place and obey and suffer in their room and stead—that is, provided you perform the condition of the *same* covenant of works which Adam was under, now enlarged by Adam's disobedience." Thus it was that the two Persons of the adorable Trinity entered into a covenant.

Some of the passages which teach that the Father gave this work to his Son to perform (the work of bringing in an everlasting righteousness by his obedience and suffering), that the Son freely undertook the work assigned him, and that the Father stipulated to reward him by "giving" him all those in whose place he should die, are the following.

To quote a passage first from an Old Testament writer, in the memorable closing verses of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah we read as follows: "*When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the*

*travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

Here it is declared that the blessed Messiah is to be the possessor of a rich reward promised him. He is to behold his seed, his saved ones, he is to see the glorious result of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and all because by his own agreement the Father was to deliver him up and make his soul an offering for sin, and cause him to bear his people's iniquities. It is not possible to read these words of the sacred writer without seeing that what Christ suffered he had been *designated* to suffer, and that by covenant.

Among the many declarations of the New Testament writers on this subject, none, perhaps, is more striking than that familiar one contained in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, where we are told that the eternal Son of God *made himself of no*

*reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And on this account, the inspired apostle goes on to say, God hath highly exalted him.*

With the declarations of our Lord himself bearing on this subject all readers of the New Testament are familiar. Some of these declarations are found in John iv. 34; vi. 38-40; x. 27-29; xvii. 4, 9, 24. They should be taken together; and when thus read, they teach that the Father gave the Son a work to perform, a prominent part of which consisted in his devoting himself to death for his sheep; that he sent him into the world to accomplish that work, and that he promised to reward him upon its accomplishment by causing those given him to come to him, to be partakers of his redemption. Christ represents his coming, his humiliation, his dying, as what his Father's commandment had enjoined upon him and as what his Father loved him for: *Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life. . . . This commandment* [*i. e., to lay*

down his life] *have I received of my Father.* And he represents the eternal life of his people as the recompense set before him for coming into the world and dying. He was not to lose a single one: *And this is the Father's will that sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life.*

Thus it is evident that the work of Christ has immediate respect to a covenant. "The authority of the Father appoints certain duties to the Son; the Father's love and faithfulness guarantee to the Son certain promises of support, countenance, comfort, victory. The Son undertakes the duties assigned, and appeals to the promises relating to them." It has been truly said that this wonderful covenant or compact between the Father and the Son, kept before the mind and not lost sight of, gives doctrinal significance to what were otherwise mere external history, for it places the outward movements of Christ's career on earth in their true relations with the eternal purpose of

the Godhead and the eternal destinies of men.

The consent on the part of the eternal Son to subject himself to the law to which we were bound involved an agreement to become incarnate. This was a necessary *preliminary* step, and this, therefore, was a part of the work assigned him by the Father. He was to be born of a woman—born as we are born—taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. Thus, though he was to remain the same divine Person he had ever been, he was to take our nature into personal union with himself. Taking part of flesh and body, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, becoming in all things like unto his brethren, yet without sin, he would not only be constituted a person susceptible of suffering and death, but he would be made capable of sympathizing with his people, of being touched with the feeling of their infirmities. As his becoming incarnate was a necessary preliminary step, he *covenanted* thus to assume our nature no less than to die.

The subject of the covenant between the Father and the Son in reference to the salva-

tion of man is full of mystery. It is, however, clearly revealed in the Scriptures, and what the Scriptures teach in relation to it we must reverently consider. There is, indeed, one only living and true God, yet in the Godhead there are three Persons. This admits of one being the object of the acts of the other, and of one loving and addressing the other. It admits of two of the divine Persons entering into a covenant with each other. "The infinitude of God does not render such a transaction impossible."

Although there is nothing in the nature of a covenant between two parties which requires that they should be on an equality, yet the two parties to the eternal covenant of grace are equal: they are equal in honor, power and glory. Nor are the Scriptures, when they affirm this equality, inconsistent with themselves in teaching that the Father sends the Son into the world, gives him a work to do and promises to reward him for performing the work assigned him. If this implies some kind of subordination of the Son to the Father, it is a subordination without inferiority. It is a subordination which is consistent with the Son's possessing



the same infinite perfections that belong to the Father.

What makes it so important that the covenant of grace should fill a large space in our thoughts is, that it constitutes a union between Christ and his people prior to all the other unions which exist between them. It is the foundation of the *representative* union. When the blessed Redeemer covenanted with the Father to undertake the work of purchasing our redemption, he became, even in the counsels of eternity, one with us. Thus it became fit that he should become our representative, our substitute, and die for us. He could not be accepted as standing in the relation of the substitute and surety of his people without this *previous covenant* oneness. What comfort, then, should it give us to know that before the foundation of the world this union was really established! Being identified with the people given unto him by the covenant which took place between himself and the Father, he becomes their competent and acceptable substitute and surety.

Another reason why it is important that the covenant of grace should be fully recog-

nized and frequently held up before our minds, is that where Christ, the last Adam, is little recognized as a covenant head there can be little reason or inducement to recognize the first in that light either. "It will uniformly be found that the theology which is meagre in reference to the covenant of grace is still more so as to the covenant of works. In fact, it is more from what is partly the analogy and partly the antithesis of the two covenants, when set forth in the mutual light which they reflect on each other, that the covenant of works becomes manifest than in any very express or abundant evidence of its own alone."\*

When the blessed Son of God, by the terms of the covenant of grace, became our substitute, it was with the view, as already stated, of performing the same condition the fulfillment of which was originally demanded of Adam in order to his obtaining eternal life—with this difference, that in consequence of Adam's transgression the condition comprehended more in its requirements than it

\* *The Atonement in its Relations to the Covenant, the Priesthood, the Intercession of our Lord*, by Rev. Hugh Martin.

originally did. The eternal covenant between the Father and the Son was indeed a separate covenant from that made with Adam in Eden, yet the fulfillment of the terms of the one covenant was the express condition of the other covenant, except that in the case of man in a state of innocence the condition was only obedience to its precepts, whereas in the case of guilty man and that of Christ, his representative, it was not only obedience, but suffering.

As the covenant of grace was formed with Christ as the head and representative of his people, it was formed in him *with all those given to him by the Father*.\* Thus we see

\* There is no doctrinal difference between those who hold, as we do, that the only real covenant connected with the salvation of man is the eternal covenant of grace between the Father and the Son, and those who hold that besides *this* eternal covenant (which they call the covenant of redemption) there is a covenant between God and believers, this *last* being styled by them the covenant of grace. It must be remembered that even the former class, who include all the facts of Scripture relating to the subject under *one* covenant, admit that the transaction with believers in reference to their salvation may be called a covenant, only they maintain that it is but the administration by the Mediator of the eternal covenant for the purpose of communicating its

why the apostle draws a parallel between Adam and Christ. Adam and Christ are the respective federal heads or representatives of those whom the one by his disobedience involved in condemnation, and for whom the other has by his obedience obtained eternal life.

We have considered a few of the passages of Scripture which teach that the Son is recompensed for bringing in an everlasting righteousness through his obedience and suffering by seeing the eternal happiness and blessedness of those for whom he died; in other words, by witnessing the salvation of his Church. This was the joy which was set before him. This was his crowning reward, the recompense which he most coveted. But in addition to this promise, which had respect to his beloved people, there was a promise or blessings to those for whom they are intended. Thus they hold that this covenant with believers (which they contend should be looked at in the light of an administrative provision, since Christ *gives* them the faith he demands of them), promising them salvation on condition of faith, is not an entirely separate one from the covenant of which God and his Son are the parties. And the covenant between Christ and his people may with propriety also be called, as the *other* is, the covenant of grace.

stipulation which had respect to his own Person.

1. It was provided that he should be exalted to the throne of universal dominion.

Our Lord had reference to this promise of the eternal covenant when, just as he was about to ascend, he said to his disciples, *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.* Heaven and earth are in scriptural language the whole universe. To this promise made to the Son the apostle also had reference when, writing to the Philippians, he says: *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; and to the Ephesians God raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet.*

The absolutely universal dominion of the

God-man Mediator is also asserted in Hebrews when it is said, *Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet ; for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.*

Our blessed Jesus has ascended up on high. He is recompensed for all his sufferings. *He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.* The Father loveth the Son ; and in accordance with the arrangements of the counsels of eternity, he hath committed all things into his hands. Having been thus exalted to a position of unlimited dominion, he has received such names and titles as King of kings, Lord of all, and Prince of peace. As mediatorial King, our Saviour has the volitions and actions of all moral agents in the entire universe under his complete control. "All discordant passions and interests, all the activities of superior intelligences, as well the enmity of fiends as the ministry of angels," and even all irrational and inanimate things, are made subservient to his designs.

The dominion of which we speak must not be confounded with that providential gov-

ernment which *necessarily* belongs to Christ as a divine Person, and of which he can never divest himself. We are speaking of that sovereignty which attaches to that wonderful and glorious Person, the God-man, occupying the office of mediator, and which has been given him in fulfillment of the promise of the covenant made with him by the Father. Our Mediator is not the Logos, but that man in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, the Son of God, with our nature in such intimate union with his divine Person that it is as truly his own as his divine nature is. "That a person in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who is filled with all the love, tenderness, compassion, meekness and forbearance which Christ manifested while here on earth, has all power in heaven and earth committed to his hands, and is not far from any one of us, is an unspeakable delight to all his people."

It is in order that he may carry on his mediatorial work that he is thus exalted. But such exaltation would not have been possible unless he had already been in possession of divine perfections, for the nature

of this dominion, and its extent, demand such perfections. God has not said, "Sit on my right hand," to any creature but to Him who was already the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. For only one possessed of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence could exercise a dominion embracing all creatures and all orders of beings, and reaching even to the reason and conscience. Inasmuch as this kingdom, extending over the universe, has been given to Christ in order that he may have power to consummate the work of redemption, when this purpose is accomplished he will deliver it up and no longer as Mediator reign over the universe. But he will still remain the Head and Sovereign of the redeemed in heaven, and that for ever.

2. But the exaltation promised the Redeemer in the eternal compact consists not only in his being appointed to have dominion over the universe. It consists also in his being appointed to administer the affairs of his own people—his Church as distinct from the universe.

This Church is a kingdom of vast extent. In one aspect it embraces the body of Christ's



professing people—that is, the visible organized church; in another aspect his kingdom relates only to those who have the Holy Spirit and are truly members of his body.

*First.* We will first say a few words about his kingly office, as it relates only to these latter—viz., to those who have the Holy Spirit and are his own true people.

In executing his kingly office as it relates to his own true people—his own redeemed ones—he performs acts which terminate directly on their souls; for, seated on his throne, he “as Mediator effectually applies to his people through his Spirit that salvation which he had previously achieved for them in his estate of humiliation.” As the God-man and Head of the Church, the Mediator has received the Holy Spirit to send to his chosen people to renew their hearts, to sanctify, establish and comfort them, and to enrich them with heavenly gifts.

The apostle speaks of this in his Epistle to the Ephesians where he says, *To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* And Peter teaches

the same truth when he says to the Jewish rulers, *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin.*

Christ is the source of the inward life of his people—the Church for which he died—and also of its power. This would not be possible if he were only human, but he is more than human. His Person is divine; he is the God-man; and it is as such that in ascending up on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. The gifts bestowed upon his people are those which he secured for them by fulfilling by his obedience and death the conditions of the covenant of grace. And it is by bestowing upon them these *inward* gifts that he applies his purchased redemption to them.

Had our first federal head, Adam, fulfilled in Paradise the condition of the covenant of works, had he when on probation strictly adhered to the law's demands, he would have received at the close of his probation the reward promised him, and the blessing would also have come upon his posterity. We should have been made partakers of it. We should have partaken of it immediately upon

our coming into existence, for we should have had no depravity to be first removed in order to render us capable of fully entering upon our reward, and no act of our souls would have been necessary to make Adam's obedience *our* obedience. And as no act of ours would have been necessary, as no co-operation on our part would have been required, to place us in the position to be benefited by Adam's obedience, so no one holding an office analogous to Christ's kingly office would have been needed to administer to us the spiritual and eternal good secured for us by Adam's perfect conformity to the divine law during the limited period of his probation. The good merited for us by Adam's righteousness we would at once have enjoyed.

But Adam broke the covenant—he failed to render obedience—and merited no reward either for himself or for us whom he represented. And now, our souls cannot come into possession of the benefits of redemption which the second Adam has merited for us, unless they are by Christ himself administered to us. *How* he administers them to us has already been seen. He bestows inward gifts upon us. He sends us his Holy Spirit to

give us faith. The Spirit of Christ works faith in us, and gives us strength to submit to the righteousness of God. But faith is not a gift alone; it is also our duty to Christ. It is an exercise of our own souls—one which is so necessary that we cannot be saved without it—while it is to Him who is our Redeemer and Sovereign a duty. And thus it is that our blessed Mediator, in the very act of enriching us with the benefits of redemption, secures our performance of the duties to be performed by us as the condition of obtaining those benefits.

*Second.* But while in one aspect of Christ's kingly office that office relates only to those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, and are thus the true members of his body, he also as King administers the affairs of the Church as an external and organized body.

It is not our design to go into the subject of Christ's kingly administration of the affairs of his Church, considered as visible and external. Some of his kingly acts with reference to his external Church are those of prescribing its form, order, and functions, and also its officers, who are to act as organs of

those functions, etc. Another act which he performs with reference to his people, as professors of his religion, is that of requiring of them, visibly and before men, to covenant with him. If they obey him, they will not only enter into covenant with him in an inward spiritual manner by embracing his gospel by faith, but they will visibly and externally covenant with him by professing him before men. It was one of the stipulations of the eternal covenant of grace between the Father and the Son, that the Son should administer to his people his purchased blessings by covenanting with them and requiring them to enter into covenant with him. And when they visibly, before witnesses, enter into covenant with their mediatorial King, declaring that they will be his people and serve him, they covenant for their children (as we shall endeavor to prove) as well as for themselves; and thus it is that the children of professors are members of the visible Church.

## CHAPTER II.

THE BELIEVER'S COVENANT WITH CHRIST  
WHEN HE FIRST EXERCISES A LIVING  
FAITH.—THE COVENANT WHICH IS EX-  
TERNALLY ENACTED BY ALL WHO PRO-  
FESS THE TRUE RELIGION.

I. THERE is an *inward embracing of the covenant*, which is the act of every soul when it exercises a living faith.

There is something which we must do in order to be saved. We must believe. We must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, in whom and for whose sake salvation is bestowed upon us. We cannot partake of the blessings of the eternal covenant unless we have faith. This faith, this consenting of the soul to be saved on God's own terms, this receiving Christ, is not the meritorious ground of our salvation ; nevertheless, it may be called the condition of our salvation in the sense of being a *sine qua non* to salvation. If salvation is be-

stowed upon those, and upon those only, who trust in Jesus, then this trust may be said to be the condition on which we are saved, simply because it is absolutely necessary that we should exercise trust, and not because there is any merit in the act.

Faith, then, is the condition (as thus understood) on which salvation is bestowed upon us. If this be so, it follows that every one who has found Jesus and has accepted of him as his only Saviour has entered into a covenant with him, and that because Jesus agrees to save such a soul on condition that it trusts in him, and the soul agrees to the condition and does cordially exercise the trust. Here is a covenant, and it is right to call the promise to save the believing soul a covenant promise.

It is assumed that the benefits of redemption have already been purchased by Christ for those to whom they belong, he having fulfilled the conditions of the eternal covenant by his obedience and sufferings.

The Father rewards his Son for his humiliation, and one part of the Son's reward consists in his having the benefits of his covenant placed in his hands to dispense to his

own people. He dispenses them to each soul given to him by the Father by entering into a special covenant with that soul. The soul fulfills its part when it believes, and the mediatorial King fulfills his part by bestowing upon it salvation. It is not meant that what thus takes place between the believer and his Saviour is the fulfillment or carrying out of exactly the same kind of covenant which men make with each other, for the very power to exercise faith is a gift of Christ's Spirit; nevertheless, faith is a duty to Christ as well as a gift from him, and must be an act of our own. If faith is an act of our own, then we co-operate with the Holy Spirit in exercising it. Every believer, without a single exception, by an act of his own enters into a covenant with Christ in the secrecy of his soul as soon as in his inmost soul he believes. Yes, we are saved by sincerely and inwardly embracing Christ's gracious covenant-promise. It is under this form—the form of a covenant—that the gospel is represented in God's word.

When the convinced, trembling, conscience-stricken sinner comes to the Saviour, the Saviour says nothing to him about the number



and enormity of his past sins. He asks no question as to the past; he asks no other question than "Have you faith in me?" If the sinner can reply with truth, "Lord, I believe," then the Saviour will fulfill his promise to bless and to save according to the terms of the covenant of grace. And the life and salvation promised include every blessing, every gift, every mercy, which we receive from the time we first exercise faith until we die. Every good thing the believer receives, no matter how small, is bestowed upon him in fulfillment of this promise and in covenant love.

A dying Christian once said, "The evil one has once or twice since I've been sick tried to tempt me to doubt my acceptance with God, but I dare not do it, for God has promised, and I dare not doubt his word. He has promised that he will accept all who put their trust in him. This I have done, and do still. Salvation is sincerely offered to those who come to Jesus, and I have come. I therefore will not doubt."

Here is a recognition of the existence of a covenant. When this dying believer said that, having come to Christ, he was sure of

salvation because salvation is promised to those who thus come, he said in effect that he was saved by embracing a covenant. If a Christian knows that he believes, but, notwithstanding that, a sense of his sinfulness prevents him from drawing the conclusion that Christ will certainly save him, then he doubts that Christ will be faithful to his covenant promise. Whenever the Bible teaches that men are saved by faith, and in no other way, it teaches that they are saved simply by having an interest in the covenant of grace.

As, therefore, every Christian knows that his own salvation is by faith, he knows that it is because he has been enabled to lay hold of the promise of the covenant that he is saved. Even believers who lived before the time of Abraham, as Abel, Enoch, Noah and others, had knowledge of this covenant and embraced it, for they were saved by faith, the promise of redemption having been given by Christ in the garden of Eden. All who have in their hearts accepted the covenant in the way now described are thereby placed in communion with the body of God's true people—that is,

with the invisible Church, and they thereby become members of that Church.

(II.) There is an *outward* act, an external acceptance of the terms of the covenant, which takes place when a person receives baptism.

We have spoken of that *inward* embracing of the covenant of grace by faith which may be affirmed to be the act, and which must be the act, of every soul that is saved. But in addition to this there is an outward acceptance of the terms of the covenant which the Church and the world witness, and which consists in making openly a profession of religion.\*

In regard to this making a public profession, this entering into a covenant with the Lord before the Church and the world, we have several things to say, and—

\* Of course we do not hold that this external covenanting on the part of those who make an open profession by being baptized is an agreement to exercise a merely historical faith, but *really* to believe and obey. It is the believer's pledging himself visibly before men to do the *very same thing* which he has already inwardly done. If the person is *not* a true Christian, his external covenanting at the time he is baptized is his public avowal that he exercises the faith which the spectators mistakenly assume he has already exercised in the secrecy of his soul.

*First*, as to the origin or *first beginning* of this external covenanting. It began with Abraham.

Until Abraham's day the covenant had no seal, neither was any badge used to mark those as professors who professed faith in the coming Redeemer. But after Abraham had been called into the land of Canaan it pleased the Son of God, the Mediator, to form the company of believers into an external organized Church. For this purpose he required Abraham to enact the covenant with Himself, his Saviour and his God, in an external manner before men, and to receive circumcision as a badge to mark him as one who thus professed faith. The transaction between Jehovah and Abraham, so often referred to by the sacred writers, is not only called a covenant in the Old Testament, but whenever the writers of the New Testament speak of it they give it this name. We have an account of it at length in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis; but before quoting the passage in Genesis we would remark that although it contained disclosures which had never before been made, either to the patriarch or to any who preceded him, yet its

great promise, that of redemption, had been previously given to men, and Abraham had long been familiar with it. He had not only been familiar with it, but he had laid hold of it to the saving of his soul. As far as its main element was concerned, the covenant had even been both known and embraced by members of Adam's family, as also by many others who lived in the first ages of the world's history. We cannot believe that men had so long been offering their typical sacrifices without having any understanding of their true spiritual intent; and if they understood the spiritual intent of sacrifices, they had knowledge of the precious gospel promise—that is, of God's gracious covenant with man. But we proceed to quote the passage which contains the words of the covenant. The first fourteen verses of the seventeenth chapter of Genesis read as follows:

*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him,*

*saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought*

*with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

Here we have, as was said, the origin or first beginning of the external covenanting between God and believers. Although there is a sense in which this covenant made with Abraham, in as far as it promised spiritual blessings, included all nations, since the covenant contains the promise that its terms should be offered to men of all the nations of the earth, resulting in a blessing to multitudes, yet the real parties to it were God on the one hand and Abraham and his descendants on the other. The ones with whom the covenant was made were, we say, Abraham and those whom the patriarch represented; and by it he learned that it was the divine purpose to make his seed as numerous as the stars of heaven, and to bestow upon them the land of Canaan and much tem-

poral prosperity. He received the assurance that Christ should be sent into the world to be the Saviour of men, and that he should appear in the line of his descendants; and there was wrapped up in this announcement a promise to the patriarch that both he himself and his descendants should be saved on condition of faith. The patriarch was told, moreover, that it was by means of a visible sign and seal that the covenant between God and himself was to be enacted, and that all his household would be looked upon as included in the covenant in such a sense as that they would be regarded as themselves embracing it, and being so regarded they were to be circumcised no less than himself; *that each one of his natural descendants in all the generations to come would be considered as embracing the covenant as soon as his existence should begin,\** on the ground of which

\* For a Jewish child to be regarded, *as soon as born*, as one who had already embraced the covenant was the same as for such a child to be regarded as a visible church member as soon as born. It was not his receiving the seal of circumcision on the eighth day, therefore, which made him a church member; he was a church member in consequence of his filial relation to a parent who professed the true religion, and his cir-



each one was also to receive circumcision, but that if at any time a parent should refuse to allow his child to be circumcised, the covenant would in this case be considered as broken: "he hath broken my covenant."

That God, as one of the parties to this covenant, promised the patriarch salvation on condition of faith, and that Abraham, as the other party, promised to believe and obey Jehovah as the God of his redemption, we expect to prove hereafter. Most of the readers of this little volume are doubtless already convinced of it, and these, of course, have always regarded this transaction (as it really is) as *the beginning* of that act of outwardly covenanting with the Lord which is *still* the act of all who separate themselves from the world to unite with the Church.

*Second.* God's design in requiring his people to enter into covenant with himself in an external manner was to form the company of believers into a visible, external Church as an aggregate of families. This statement is involved in the explanation just given of the origin of the covenanting. At first circum-

cumcision on the eighth day was but the seal and badge of an already-existing church membership.

cision was enjoined, but under the new dispensation the badge of the covenant, or of church membership, is baptism.

The true invisible Church is kept in existence by the inward embracing of the gospel covenant by men when they exercise faith, but the Church, considered as visible and organized, is continued in existence by that outward covenanting with Christ to believe and obey him which we witness when we behold persons joining themselves to the body of professors. And when baptism is administered to such persons, it marks them not as certainly believers, but as those who *profess* to be believers. It appears, then, that the end to be secured by the covenanting with the Lord Jesus externally and before witnesses is to perpetuate the visible Church. With the Lord Jesus, we say; for even the outward visible covenanting is to be looked upon as taking place rather between Christ and professors than between God, *as God*, and professors.

For if the Lord Jesus is our Mediator, it devolves upon him to administer the benefits of the eternal covenant of grace, the conditions of which he has fulfilled. But in

order that he may fully administer them, *He* must be that Person of the Trinity whose work it is to enact with men that covenant by which they visibly engage to rely solely on the Saviour's merits and to be obedient to his voice.

Even under the old dispensation it was Jehovah, the second Person, who administered the benefits of the redemption which in the fullness of time were to be purchased by himself. He began to dispense them when, immediately after the fall, he revealed the glorious gospel truth, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He continued after this to dispense them in all the ways by which he carried on the work of the Church's redemption. We know this to be the exact truth, because, when we read the Old Testament, we find that the very Jehovah who so often appeared and spoke to men, and instructed, guided and commanded his people, was at the same time the "Sent" of God. He was, then, not the first but the second Person of the Trinity. It was He who had undertaken the office of Mediator who administered the affairs of the Church before the advent.

Remember, then, believer, not only that all Christians renew their covenant with Christ whenever they partake of the Lord's Supper, but that it is with *Him* that all enact a covenant when, in the beginning of their Christian course, they receive the seal and badge of baptism. And it is by means of this covenanting with him by baptism externally and before witnesses that his visible Church is perpetuated.

*Third.* It is this external covenanting, or, in other words, this personal professing religion or piety, and not the actual possession of religion or piety, which is the condition of visible church membership as far as adults are concerned.

What is meant by this is that applicants for church membership are not received into the church because church officers are confident of their piety upon examining them, but because church officers are bound by God's command to accept their profession of piety or religion, provided that profession is credible. The Holy Spirit tells *us* that the jailer of Philippi believed as soon as Jesus was preached unto him, but that does not prove that the apostle himself felt certain of

it. As Paul could not read the hearts of people, he could not be absolutely sure that the jailer had become a new creature; but he accepted the man's profession of faith and baptized him on the ground of it; and had he not done so, he would have disobeyed Christ. He had no choice about the matter.

When ministers administer baptism to adults who are desirous of professing publicly their faith in Christ, it is with the full understanding on the part of the ministers themselves and of all the spectators that they cannot read the hearts of the applicants. And yet, for all that, God has expressly commanded them to place his badge of church membership upon applicants whose profession is simply credible. God might himself have set the mark or badge of membership on people, placing it only on those who in his sight are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and exercise true faith, and in that case none in the world would receive baptism but true Christians. But instead of himself doing this, he appoints fallible men to perform the act, who, because they are men and have no power to discern what is going on within the

soul of another, cannot possibly be sure that they whom they receive as church members are true believers.

Thus we are required to regard and treat persons making a credible *profession* as Christians. With all our uncertainty about their inward state, if, having competent knowledge, they profess to trust in the Saviour and their profession is credible, we sin against God unless we treat them as brethren. But if their walk and conversation are clearly inconsistent with the possession of piety, their profession is not credible. So that, although we may have secret doubts of the piety of applicants for church membership—secret doubts that they belong to the invisible Church—we have no right, because of these secret doubts, to refuse to receive them into the visible Church by allowing them externally to covenant with Christ, so long as they have competent knowledge and are guilty of nothing plainly inconsistent with the possession of piety. Surely, if we often have to admit that we fail to give evidence of our own piety satisfactory to our own minds, and yet think it right to remain in the visible Church, we ought not to demand *of others* evidence of regeneration absolutely

and unquestionably satisfactory to ourselves as the condition of church membership. God gives us no permission to do it; and besides, should any church make the attempt thus to separate the tares from the wheat, it would be impossible for them to succeed, since to no set of men has power ever been given to read the heart. "It is the duty of church officers to examine the applicant as to his knowledge, to watch and inquire concerning his walk and conversation, to set before him faithfully the inward spiritual qualifications requisite for acceptable communion, and to hear his profession of that spiritual faith and purpose. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ACT THEN RESTS UPON THE INDIVIDUAL PROFESSOR, and not upon the session, who are never to be understood as passing judgment upon the validity of his evidence."

Of course it is not meant that the duty of the ministers and elders to the applicants is *wholly* discharged when they have admitted them to communion. Would they but visit, watch over, encourage, instruct, guide and pray with those whom they may have admitted with misgivings, they would be rewarded by witnessing the establishment of

the new members in the faith; and should they even receive some to communion in an unconverted state, the real conversion of such new communicants would almost certainly be the result of their faithfulness.

*Fourth.* We have seen what the condition of church membership is as far as adults are concerned—that it is the profession of personal faith. But we maintain that some infants are members of the visible Church, and what is the condition of *their* church membership?

We answer, Not their giving us evidence that they are regenerated. Nor is it a profession of religion in their own persons or a profession of personal faith such as is required of adults. *But the condition of infant church membership is the filial relation to a parent who professes the true religion.* This we expect to show in the following chapter.

Briefly, we understand the Scriptures to teach that the child is represented in the parent—that the parent acts for the child; so that whenever he enters into covenant with God for himself, he enter into covenant in behalf of his child also, and the child is to be regarded and treated as though he had done



in his own person what his parent did in his name. It follows from this that if a parent becomes a member of the visible Church by making a profession of religion, his children have the right to be recognized as church members, since they are to be regarded and treated as included in their parent's act until they are old enough to act for themselves.

From all this it is plain that the condition of visible infant church membership is, as was said, the filial relation to a parent who professes faith in Christ. This would not be a true representation of the case did the Scriptures require us to adopt the principle that men can *only* make a profession for *themselves*. This, however, is not the principle taught in the Bible. It everywhere teaches just the opposite. Under the old dispensation, whenever any foreigner became a Jew, his children, by God's command, became Jews. Here the principle is recognized that the parent in covenanting with God acts as the representative of his child. It is because Christian Churches still act on this principle that Christian Churches (with one exception) teach that the children of those

who profess Christ are born within the Church—that when one lays hold of the covenant of grace for himself, his children are to be regarded as doing the same thing. While, therefore, the Church requires an adult to make a credible profession of personal faith as the condition of becoming a church member, the condition of infant church membership is the filial relation to a parent who makes such a profession.

Let it be borne in mind, then, that when we undertake to prove in the following pages that the infants of professors are members of the visible Church, we do not undertake to prove that they are actually regenerated. We only contend that they are included in that class who are by divine command to be *regarded* as embraced in the covenant and treated as such—in other words, that they belong to that class of persons who are to be regarded and treated by the church as church members.

*Our argument for the church membership of infants is that by divine command the children of believing parents were included in the Church of old.*

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FIRST STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

SOME maintain that the Church of God under the old dispensation was in no sense a spiritual society. They maintain that the condition of membership in it was by no means any engagement to exercise faith and to fulfill similar inward spiritual duties—that, on the contrary, the condition was nothing more than birth as an Israelite, with the promise to perform ceremonial and other external observances. Hence the Church of the old dispensation and that of the new are two entirely different societies or churches, so that, even if infants were members of the Old Testament Church, it does not follow that they should be recognized as members of the Church of the new dispensation.

It is not denied by these persons that there

have always been believers in the world. They admit that before Abraham's day many received the promise of redemption by faith, and that not only the patriarch himself, but multitudes of his descendants also, were true believers. But they insist that that visible society which owed its origin to the Abrahamic covenant, and which was the Church of the old economy, was altogether distinct from the Church which has existed since the time of Christ; and from this alleged dissimilarity they draw the conclusion in reference to the ecclesiastical status of children mentioned above.

We are, therefore, called on to prove, AS THE FIRST STEP IN OUR ARGUMENT, that the visible Church of the old dispensation is the same as that of the new dispensation—that the visible Church which exists in these New Testament times is but the continuation of the Old Testament Church.

Under the old economy every Jew was a member of the visible Church. Whether he inwardly and with his heart embraced the Abrahamic covenant none could tell; it was his *professing* to do so which constituted him a visible Church member. Under the new

dispensation that which makes any one a member of the visible Church is his professing to embrace the covenant of grace. Now, this being so, we have only to show that the covenant with Abraham, as it was professed to be embraced by the ancient Jew, is the same thing with the covenant of grace, as professed to be embraced by baptized persons of our day, in order to prove the identity of the Church under both dispensations. For if that which determines the nature of the *visible* Church is the nature of the covenant which her members publicly *profess* to enter into with God, then, if that covenant is exactly the same in any two given periods of the Church's history, it follows that in these two periods of her history the visible Church herself must be the same.

A multitude of people in the world have been by the command of the Lord Jesus organized into a body which we call the visible Church. That which distinguishes it is that all its members profess faith in Jesus as their Saviour, and obedience to him. *This* is the covenant which they profess that they have entered into with Christ their Lord in the secrecy of their souls. Every adult

applicant is received into this company—the visible Church—simply on the ground of his profession, provided it is credible. The agreement or covenant within the soul to trust in Jesus, being an inward spiritual act, is not, of course, between the applicant and the visible Church into which he is admitted, but between the applicant and Christ himself; and all that the Church does is to accept the applicant's profession that he has inwardly entered into covenant with Christ and place upon him the badge—the badge of baptism, which is also a seal. Some of these members of the visible Church existing in the world have never had any true faith—have never really inwardly covenanted with Christ—*i. e.*, accepted of him as their Saviour—and such are not what they profess to be; and yet, if their profession is credible, the Church did right in receiving them, since it only acted in accordance with Christ's command.

Now, we have affirmed that the visible Church of the new dispensation is identical with the visible Church (founded on the Abrahamic covenant) which existed before the advent of Christ, because the covenant

which is professed to be embraced by the Church of the new dispensation is the same Abrahamic covenant which the Church of old professed to accept. Under the new dispensation that which constitutes a person a member of the visible Church is that public act which any one performs when he professes to embrace in his soul the covenant promising salvation to believers—*i. e.*, the covenant of grace. But this very covenant was the one which was placed by God before Abraham and the Jews of old for their acceptance, and the professing to embrace which made them church members.

Thus it is evident that, in seeking to establish the proposition that the *Church* under both dispensations is identical, the thing devolving upon us is to prove that the *Covenant* between God and believers, as professed to be embraced by those who unite with the visible Church under both dispensations, is identical. We have, however, a few words to add before presenting the Scripture proof of the identity of this covenant.

A FEW WORDS CONCERNING THE COVENANT  
AS ORIGINALLY ENACTED, AND ALSO CON-  
CERNING ITS RE-ENACTMENT WITH THE  
ISRAELITES.

In the covenant which Christ made with Abraham he promised the patriarch that his descendants should be very numerous, that he would give them the land of Canaan for a possession, and that he would be their national God and make them his peculiar people; and, above all, as the Scripture proof, which we shall present in the sequel, will show, he promised spiritual and eternal blessings to both the patriarch and his descendants on condition of faith.

And what did Abraham, on his part, promise? By being circumcised when he embraced the covenant he promised to take God to be his God, and to believe in Jehovah's declaration that he would make his descendants numerous and give them the land of Canaan. And we expect also, before this chapter is finished, to make it clear that he promised and professed faith in Christ as his Redeemer.

All this is said about the patriarch, but what is said about his household? We are



taught that they also signified their assent to the terms of this covenant by being circumcised—in other words, that they made the very same promise and profession of belief and obedience which the patriarch himself made. They were visibly (inasmuch as they were circumcised) included in the covenant. The position of Abraham's son Ishmael was not exactly the same as that of Isaac. He had no interest in the promise of the land of Canaan, being from any portion of that inheritance expressly excluded. And since he was not to inherit the land of Canaan, he was not called on to profess his belief that God would give it to him. But as far as the *spiritual* aspect of the covenant is concerned, he also was visibly included in the covenant, for he too received the seal of the righteousness of faith. He also was a professor of the true religion; and if he really *did* what he professed to do—that is, if he really exercised saving faith—he is now in heaven no less than Abraham and Isaac. Ishmael's case shows that, since circumcision was administered to those who were denied all share in the *national* privileges of the children of Abraham, it (circumcision) by no

means had sole reference to the national covenant, but also had reference, and even primary and special reference, to the spiritual covenant.

By this transaction between Christ and Abraham he and his household were constituted the visible Church; and though the world's population was very great, yet none then living belonged to the visible Church except Abraham's household. There may have been saints or believers in the country from which the patriarch came, and there may have been a few hidden believers in the land of Canaan, but they were not in the visible Church in the sense in which Abraham and his family were in it.

THE JEWS AT MOUNT SINAI WERE FORMED  
INTO A COMMONWEALTH, BUT THEY WERE  
STILL A CHURCH.

Abraham represented his posterity, and therefore not only the members of his household, who were his contemporaries, but all his descendants, were regarded as making the same profession of obedience and faith which he himself made. This applies to the Hebrews, his descendants, whom many years afterward

we find in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. God at that time gave them, through Moses, a code of laws called the Mosaic law, thereby constituting them a commonwealth. He condescended to become their King. He was from that time to rule them not merely, as he does all nations, with a providential sway, but "he was to fill that place in their political system which is filled in other states by human sovereigns." He was to appoint their rulers. The Hebrew state during all the time of its existence had human magistrates, but the people were not regarded as bearing distinct relations to the magistrate and to God: all their obligations were to God. The commonwealth was a theocracy. The code of laws which God enacted for them embraced their civil, national, social, personal and religious duties. Those enactments of this Mosaic law which regulated their religious duties required services and observances of them which none *could* render except men who professed faith in the Redeemer to come, and thus the laws by which the nation was governed recognized the nation's Church character, *and even assumed that it was a Church resting on the Abra-*

*hamic covenant.* The reward promised for keeping outwardly—*i. e.*, in the external life—the Mosaic law, was temporal prosperity, security, fruitful seasons, etc. Should any man be seen by the omniscient God to be destitute of a true faith, such a one could have no well-founded hope of salvation; nevertheless, while the want of saving faith would be attended with the loss of spiritual blessings, it would not deprive those destitute of it of temporal and national benefits, provided they rendered an external obedience to the Mosaic law. So long as external obedience was faithfully rendered they were also freely admitted, independently of their inward spiritual condition (and of course their real spiritual condition could not be discerned by their fellow-men), to the services of the temple, to the Passover, and to all the sacred festivals and typical institutions of their dispensation; and when guilty of offences against the laws of the theocracy, upon offering the sacrifices appointed and complying with certain ceremonial requisitions, the *external disabilities* to which their offences had subjected them were removed, even though in the sight of God they were not true penitents, and so

were not savingly interested in Christ's salvation.

Thus we see that, although the kingdom of God under the old dispensation was a commonwealth, yet it was a Church as well. "The people were a Church in the form of a nation. The great promise was the redemption of the world by the Messiah. To this everything else was subordinate. The main design of the constitution of the Hebrews as a distinct nation, and of their separation from all other people, was to keep alive the promise of the covenant—*i. e.*, the promise of salvation through Christ." The Israelites were regarded as having already made a profession of embracing that covenant *before* the transaction between God and them at Mount Sinai. As was said, Abraham represented his descendants, so that his act of covenanting with God was regarded as theirs. They were, therefore, assumed to be *already* in covenant with Jehovah and professors of the true religion, only at Mount Sinai there was a re-enacting of the covenant which they had already professedly embraced. At the same time, as we have seen, God attached to it the code of laws, called the Mosaic law, which

constituted them a state or commonwealth. Nevertheless, the Mosaic law did not give birth to the Hebrew nation, whether we look at it as a nation or a Church. The Hebrew Church and nation were originated by the Abrahamic covenant. This is what we also affirm of the Church of the new dispensation. It rests on the same covenant on which the Church of old was built—that, namely, which Christ formed with Abraham—a covenant promising salvation on condition of faith. And as the Church must always be the same while the covenant on which it rests is the same, the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church are identical.

It is true that the present dispensation is a different dispensation from that which the Old Testament Church was under. What this means it is important to know. Many, even educated people, have not sufficiently attended to the true meaning of the word “dispensation.” By the old (or Mosaic) dispensation we mean the old *mode of dispensing* saving blessings and gifts to the Church. By the new dispensation is meant that mode of dispensing such blessings to the Church which has taken the place of the old mode. There

has, then, been a change, but it has not affected his Church as to its essence, nor have the benefits and blessings been changed from what they were. "Modes and forms of dispensation do not affect the substance of the things dispensed." We repeat it, therefore, that the Church under both dispensations is the same, because the covenant remains unchanged.

Having offered these remarks on the position in which Abraham and his descendants were placed by the original enacting, and afterward by the re-enacting, of the covenant, we are ready for the scriptural proofs afforded by the New Testament writers that the covenant between God and believers is the same under both dispensations.

In one of its aspects the covenant which God made with the patriarch was a national one. God promised, as we have already shown, that he would constitute his descendants his own people, give them the land of Canaan for a habitation, and make them, as far as temporal benefits were concerned, the objects of his special favor. And many insist that the divine promise went no farther. They strenuously contend that it is an entire

mistake to suppose that Jehovah, when he made a covenant with Abraham, intended to promise him and his descendants spiritual blessings on condition of faith and obedience. And of course they deny that the kingdom of God, under the old dispensation built on this covenant, was one and the same Church with the New Testament Church.

#### WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS SAY.

The New Testament writers, however, teach that the covenant set before Abraham and the Jewish people for their acceptance, and which they all professed to embrace, did *not* simply offer national and temporal blessings on condition of faith in the divine promise to bestow such blessings, but did also and mainly offer the blessings of redemption on condition of faith in the Redeemer to come, and was, therefore, the covenant of grace.

Paul, for example, teaches that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace when, writing to the Galatians (chap. iii.), he proves to them the doctrine of justification by faith.

The Galatians, of course, earnestly desired



salvation, but they were bent on seeking it by works—*i. e.*, by a strict adherence to the Mosaic ritual law given at Mount Sinai four hundred and thirty years after Abraham's day, but which, when the Redeemer was crucified, was abrogated. Paul admits that if salvation is not by faith it must be by works, because there are only these two methods of being saved; but he tells the Galatians that it is *by faith*, and by faith only, that they can be saved, and he brings forward as a strong argument God's covenant with Abraham. He says that to faithful Abraham—that is, to Abraham exercising faith—and also to those Gentiles who should believe, no less than to the Jews, God in covenant gave the inheritance (salvation) by promise of pure grace, and in no other way, and that *that* is inconsistent with salvation being obtained by works of any kind, since, “if the inheritance or salvation be of the law, it is no more of promise.” Gal. iii. 18. It (*viz.*, the *covenant with Abraham*, by the terms of which he and all the nations of the earth were promised a free salvation by faith) was inconsistent with the bestowment of salvation on the ground of obedience to the ceremo-

nial law, unless the ceremonial law had power to disannul the Abrahamic covenant. This, however, the apostle declares is impossible. Even a human covenant, if it be ratified, cannot be disannulled or added to. Of course, then, the covenant [with Abraham] that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty-years after, cannot disannul that it should make the promise of none effect. Gal. iii. 17.

By thus showing the Galatians that the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, and by reminding them that it could not be annulled, the apostle proves to them the uselessness of seeking salvation through obedience to the law.

Since, then, the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, and since that which made a man a member of the Old Testament Church was his professing to embrace the Abrahamic covenant, it follows that all Old Testament Church members were visible Church members in consequence of professing to embrace the covenant of grace. Therefore the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church are the same Church.

We only partly describe the Abrahamic

covenant when we say that it was a promise to give the patriarch and those whom he represented salvation on condition of faith in a coming Redeemer. It was also a promise to give free salvation to people of every station and clime and color on condition of faith in Jesus, and that to the very end of time. You cannot, therefore, fully explain the Abrahamic covenant without your very explanation involving the idea that from Abraham's day to the end of time, the Church must always be the same.

Read carefully the argument in the third chapter of Galatians, which we have thus partially presented, and you will see that the apostle teaches not only that the thing promised was that inheritance the author of which is Christ and the condition of participating in which is faith, but also that the thing promised, is the inheritance of which all nations are the heirs, and not the Jews only.

When we ask, What was the covenant set before Abraham and his descendants, and which by being circumcised they professed to embrace? the answer is, The very same which we profess to embrace at the time we receive baptism, when we declare before men

that we rest on Christ alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel. This is the teaching of Paul's words to the Galatians above quoted (Gal. iii. 15-18). And his words in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the fourth chapter to the Romans contain the same teaching.

The apostle wished to convince the Romans that we are justified not by works of law, but by faith only. And to convince them of it he tells them expressly that this was the meaning of the terms of the covenant announced to Abraham. The covenant promise to the patriarch was conditioned on faith. That promise cannot now, therefore, consistently with the divine fidelity, be made to depend on obedience to the law, but must also in *our* case depend on the condition that we have faith. Certainly, says the apostle, *we* are saved by faith, and not by works of law, *for*, in the case of Abraham, the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to him or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. So that now, if they which are of the *law* be heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of none effect. Paul could not in this

way have argued for justification by faith alone from the covenant set before Abraham and the ancient Jewish people for their acceptance if that covenant had not been the covenant of grace—*i. e.*, had not promised salvation on condition of faith instead of merely promising national benefits.

The promise to Abraham, then, was of faith. “And it was of faith in order that it might be sure to all the seed—to all his spiritual children, whether Jews or Gentiles. For the paternity of Abraham extends far beyond the Jews. He is the father of all who believe. This, says the apostle, was the tenor of the original covenant. This was the very thing which God intended when he said, ‘I will make thee a father of many nations.’ The terms of the covenant with Abraham were not one thing and the gospel of Jesus Christ another: they are one and the same; and therefore, in order to be saved, we must embrace the covenant made with Abraham.” And it is required of us that we profess to embrace it, so that, making the same profession which the Jews did, we and they are members of the same visible Church.

The covenant, then, with Abraham, on

which the Church of the old dispensation rested, was the covenant of grace. Its call to the sons of men, therefore, was the same as that which we now recognize as the gospel call: "Believe on the Lamb of God—only believe—and salvation is yours." The covenant, however, bore the visible sign and seal of circumcision, and its *whole* declaration was, "He that believeth and is circumcised shall be saved." Still, circumcision did not sustain the same relation to salvation that faith sustained; for as we know that some now are saved who have never been baptized, so we cannot doubt that formerly some reached heaven who were never circumcised.

That the visible Church of the old dispensation, like that of the new, was built on the profession of faith in the religion of the gospel is evident from the apostle's declaration in Gal. iii. 8: *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* Here Paul represents the covenant with the patriarch to be the very gospel which has come to us. Is it not strange that, notwithstanding such explanatory dec-

larations of the New Testament writers, there are those who can insist that the Abrahamic covenant was merely national and entirely distinct from the covenant of grace? But we know why they have adopted this view of the subject. It is because it cannot be denied that infants were included in the covenant made with Abraham, from which it follows that if that covenant was the covenant of grace, the covenant of grace includes infants—in other words, that they can be church members and the sign of church membership can be administered to them.

We see from many passages in the Acts of the Apostles—as Acts iii. 25, 26; Acts xiii. 32, 33; Acts xxvi. 6, 7—that the apostles explain the promise of the Abrahamic covenant contained in Gen. xii. 3; Gen. xviii. 18; Gen. xxii. 18; Gen. xxvi. 4; and Gen. xxviii. 14 to be the promise of CHRIST. This promise, in fact, fills the Old Testament. No wonder that those who were Israelites indeed, confidently expected Christ and waited for the salvation of Israel. *These* interpreted the covenant which God made with Abraham as promising pardon and the favor of God on condition of faith, and they *professed* to exer-

cise this faith. As, therefore, we profess the same faith and look for the same blessings, the Church of our day and that of the old dispensation are one and the same.

We have an instance of a devout Jew's interpreting the Abrahamic covenant to be a covenant promising Christ and redemption in the exultant song of the father of the forerunner: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember HIS HOLY COVENANT; THE OATH WHICH HE SWARE TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM, that he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.* The original and fundamental, the central and all-pervading, promise was that of a personal Saviour. The Old Testament gospel was that such a Saviour should come. The gospel of the New Testament is that he has come, or, as Paul expresses it in the synagogue of Antioch, *We declare unto you*



*glad tidings how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again.*

As we have said, this promise fills the Old Testament. "The whole of the Old Testament is nothing more than a record of the historical development of the promise, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'"

"The introduction of the heathen *into the covenant of God with Abraham*, in relation to his seed, was clearly predicted. The prophets rejoiced when they saw the nations flocking like clouds or as doves, not to the narrow enclosure of Judaism, but to the broad field of the Abrahamic covenant—when they saw even Ethiopia and the isles of the sea stretching out their hands to the long-promised seed. And the apostles take up the same strain and tell the people—Gentiles and Jews—that God had fulfilled the covenant made with Abraham in that he had raised up his Son Jesus and sent him to bless them.

"In the New Testament, therefore, the constant representation is that the Gentiles are made fellow-citizens of the saints and of the

household of God ; they are introduced, not into the covenant from Mount Sinai, but into the earlier, broader covenant made with the fathers. They were not planted as a new tree, but grafted into the old stock. They did not bear the root, but the root them."

THE CHURCH UNDER BOTH DISPENSATIONS  
THE SAME OLIVE TREE.

It is plain, from the apostle's discussion of the great question concerning the rejection of the Jews, the vocation of the Gentiles and the future restoration of the Jews, that the Church under both dispensations is the same OLIVE TREE. Rom. ii. 17-24. To borrow the energetic words of Dr. Mason in his essay on the Church of God : "What was the 'good olive tree' from which the Jewish branches were 'broken off,' while the Gentiles were grafted in ? Evidently, the visible Church organized under the covenant made with Abraham. There was no other from which the Jews could be cast off. The ceremonial law was superseded. It was no excision at all to be cut off from a Church which did not exist, nor could the Gentiles be introduced into it. But what says the

apostle? That the 'olive tree' was *cut down* or *rooted up*? That it had withered, trunk and branch? Or was no longer under the care of the divine Planter? Nothing like it! He asserts the continuance of the olive tree in life and vigor, the excision of some worthless branches and the insertion of new ones in their stead. 'Thou,' says he, addressing the Gentile, 'partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.' Translate this into less figurative language, and what is the import? That the Church of God, his visible Church, taken into peculiar relations to himself by the Abrahamic covenant, subsists without injury through the change of dispensation and of members. Branches, indeed, may be cut off, but the rooted trunk stands firm, and other branches occupy the places of those which are lopped away. The Jews were cast out of the Church, but the Church perished not with them. There was still left the trunk of the olive tree; there was still fatness in its roots; it stands in the same fertile soil, the covenant of God; and the admission of the Gentiles into the room of the excommunicated Jews makes them a part of that covenanted Church, as branches grafted into the

olive tree and flourishing in its fatness are identified with the tree. It is impossible for ideas conceived in the mind of man or uttered in his language to assert more peremptorily the continuance of the Church under that very covenant which was established with Abraham and his seed."

The jailer of Philippi, the eunuch whose question was, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" and all others who by their own desire are received into the Church, promise faith and obedience to Christ. But the members of the Old Testament Church made the same promise and profession. This being the case, that Church was as truly a spiritual society as is the New Testament Church. This is by some denied. They contend that it was merely an external society, membership in which depended on natural birth, and not at all on an engagement to discharge inward spiritual duties. We have sufficiently considered the views of these objectors.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS THE SAME AS THE CHURCH OF OLD, NOTWITHSTANDING IT IS NOW DISTINCT FROM THE STATE.

There are, however, others who are willing to admit that the kingdom of God before the advent consisted of professors of the true religion, but who urge that, since it was *also* a State and had a national character, it is wrong to call it exactly the same Church as that of the new dispensation. It is not now, as it then was, a Church and a nation at the same time. How, then, can it now be exactly what it was of old? Membership did, indeed, depend upon the profession of the soul's faith in Christ as a Saviour, but persons had likewise to promise the performance of ceremonial observances and of the duties of national citizenship, whereas, in New Testament times, *only* the profession of faith in Jesus and promise of allegiance to him are required.

This objection would be sound if it really followed, as a consequence of the disappearance of the Church's *national* aspect, that its essence was at once changed. You are a per-

son, consisting of soul and body. When you die you drop the body, and only your soul remains, but, for all that, you are exactly the same *person* you were before, because your personality resides, not in your body, but in your soul. In like manner, the essence of the Church of old did not reside in those things belonging to it in virtue of which it had a national character; and therefore, though at the advent everything pertaining to it which had constituted it a national society, a commonwealth, disappeared, it nevertheless continued to be the same Church it had been before the coming of Christ.

Though the Bible does not distinguish two Abrahamic covenants, yet we may make the distinction if we do so merely for the sake of perspicuity and convenience. We may say that there was a spiritual covenant relating to Christ and a national covenant relating to the possession of the land of Canaan. Now, let us not so confound the *Church*, built on the spiritual covenant, with the *nation*, which rested on the national covenant, as to say that the Church in these New Testament times is of a different nature from the Old Testament Church. This would betray a

strange confusion of ideas. Let us not fall into the error of supposing that when the new dispensation began, the Church itself disappeared because its *framework* was removed. The Hebrew commonwealth and ritual were indeed abolished, but the Church did not disappear; it did not come to an end. It remained. Looking at the kingdom of God as it existed before the advent, we see a "Church in the form of a nation;" but its being this did not hinder its finding its own continuance in the Church which has existed since the advent, even though since the advent nothing of the national character which once pertained to it has been perpetuated. It not only remained after its old form had disappeared, but, we had almost said, it became the Church more intensely than ever. Under the old dispensation it was in a state of tutelage; it was burdened with a hierarchy and a pompous ritual; it was restricted to one nation; but when Christ came, its trammels were thrown off. It became capable of unlimited enlargement. The Gentiles were at once introduced into the covenant made with the fathers, and became fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God.

Thus the Church continued to be the same notwithstanding its old *form* went out of existence. The change in it which took place upon its losing its national character was not an essential one; it was only accidental. In fact, its own preservation in that age of the world was just the end contemplated in its having the national form, which until the advent of Christ it possessed.

Our heavenly Father was intent on having the true religion preserved until Christ should come. His way of doing this was to make "his nation a Church and his Church a nation." But when Christ came, *this* wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles was broken down in order that all nations might be embraced in the Church, according to what Paul says: *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.\** Surely a change, the only object and result of which was to remove limitations and introduce men of all nations into the fold, cannot make the Church, since the coming of Christ, different from the Church of the old dispensation. There having been no change in the *covenant*, the

\* Rom. iii. 29.



Church under both dispensations is identical.

*In the next chapter it is proved that infants were members of the Church of the old dispensation by God's command.*

## CHAPTER IV.

SECOND STEP OF THE ARGUMENT.—THE ANSWERS TO THIS ARGUMENT WHICH HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED, SHOWN TO BE INCONCLUSIVE.—THE CONCLUSION REACHED.

It was shown in the preceding chapter that the Church under the old dispensation and the Church under the new dispensation are one and the same Church. We advance now a step farther, and maintain that infants were members of the Church under the old dispensation.

Abraham's circumcision confirmed to him the fact that God regarded and treated him as righteous in the sight of the law. This is the sense in which it was a seal. When a document is drawn up for two parties to a contract to sign, a seal is affixed to the document, and its intent is to show that upon each party the contract is binding. Abraham's circumcision was a seal by which God, in his infinite condescension, bound himself

to give him the blessings of redemption so long as the patriarch exercised faith—to give him at death heaven itself should faith be found in his heart. And Abraham, on his part, bound himself by being circumcised to obey and serve God as the God of his redemption.

What was true of Abraham's circumcision was true of Isaac's. Isaac, of course, understood the nature and design of the circumcision which he had received in his infancy—that in case he exercised faith it was a seal to him also of spiritual blessings. And in every case during the whole of the old dispensation in which the rite was administered it meant precisely what it meant in Abraham's and Isaac's case. Down to the very crucifixion of Christ, when the veil was rent, no one was ever circumcised without the sacrament having the same significance it had at first. Circumcision was a seal of spiritual blessings; it was a badge of church membership. To be circumcised was to be a member of the visible Church.

Now, God commanded his people to circumcise their infants; therefore God commanded his people to recognize their infants

as church members; to regard and treat them as such; to give them the privileges which of right belong to all who are members of the visible Church. But the Church was the same under the old dispensation that it is under the new; therefore it is the will of God that the infants of believers, under the new dispensation also, should be recognized and treated as Church members.

Here the argument would be ended were it not that there are some who boldly deny that circumcision *was* a seal of spiritual blessings. They see that if they admit this they will be obliged to admit that infants were regarded and treated as members of the Church under the old economy, considered as a spiritual society, since men might as well insist that no such book as the Bible exists as refuse to acknowledge that by God's command the infants of parents who descended from Abraham, and likewise the infants of those who joined themselves to the people of the God of Israel, were circumcised. They, therefore, stoutly deny that circumcision was a badge of membership in a spiritual society and a seal of the righteousness of Christ by which men are justified.

Our position, then, will be established (the Church membership of infants under the old dispensation), if we prove that circumcision was a seal of the covenant which promised spiritual blessings. This, therefore, we proceed to prove, premising that what we hold is not that the membership of infants was constituted by their circumcision, but that their circumcision recognized their birth-right membership as those who sustained a filial relation to parents who professed the true religion.

1. Our first argument to prove that circumcision was a seal of the covenant which promised spiritual blessings, is that the Abrahamic covenant was not distinct from the covenant of grace, but was the same thing with it. Circumcision, then, inasmuch as it was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was the seal of the covenant of grace.

To this, however, some reply that, while circumcision was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant viewed in its *national* aspect, it was not the seal of the *entire* Abrahamic covenant; it was not the seal of the Abrahamic covenant *viewed as referring to Christ*. All that a person professed (say these opposers)

when he was circumcised was that he embraced the covenant in its national aspect, and circumcision only secured his interest in the national promises. And viewed as a badge or mark, it was *only* the mark of the nationality of Abraham's descendants, and was not intended to mark them as of the number of God's professing people.

Thus do these opposers entirely separate the national from the spiritual aspect of the Abrahamic covenant.

But the sophistry of this reasoning will be apparent when we look at the case of Ishmael. Circumcision did not secure *his* interest in the national promises, for by God's express appointment he had no interest whatever in the promise of the land of Canaan. In *his* case, certainly, circumcision was a seal of the covenant in its spiritual aspect. "When the father of the faithful received the great promise of redemption and bound himself to take Jehovah to be his God, he made this profession and engagement for Ishmael as well as for himself. Isaac made the same profession and covenant for Esau as he did for Jacob. Ishmael and Esau were as much bound to take Jehovah

to be their God and to look for salvation through the promised seed as were Isaac and Jacob.”

Thus the spiritual element might be professedly embraced by those who had no part in the temporal blessings of Abraham. A man might be circumcised with reference to the spiritual covenant exclusive of the national, but none could be circumcised with reference to the national covenant exclusive of the spiritual. None could enroll themselves among the children of Abraham and claim as his descendants a part of the national inheritance without at the same time entering into covenant with God with reference to spiritual blessings. “By the very act of circumcision he took God to be his God and promised to be one of his people—*i. e.*, to believe what God had taught, trust in what he had promised and do what he had commanded. A Jew who did not *thus* profess allegiance to God, who renounced all interest in the promise of the Messiah, was an impossibility. By being a Jew he professed the whole Jewish faith and promised fidelity to the whole religion of the Hebrews. No child was ever presented by his parent for

circumcision in whose behalf a profession of faith in the true religion and fidelity to the true God were not thereby made."

Our argument, then, remains untouched that circumcision, by being the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was the seal of the covenant of grace. Whether, therefore, it was administered to infants or to adults, it was that by which the recipient bound himself to serve, trust and obey the God of redemption, and by which God, in infinite condescension, bound himself to bless the recipient with all spiritual blessings on condition of faith. He who received circumcision, therefore, was in the visible Church, and yet infants were circumcised.

2. We have before us for consideration the covenant which God made with the members of the Jewish Church, with its promises, and we see that the sign of circumcision was attached to it. The question is, What kind of benefits did that covenant, to which circumcision was attached, promise? The question will be answered when we learn what was symbolized by its sign. If the sign of the Abrahamic covenant symbolized regeneration—inward purification—then the cov-



enant itself (viewed in that aspect in which it is admitted that it included infants) *promised* regeneration—inward purification—*i. e.*, was the covenant of grace.

Now, that circumcision was the sign of regeneration the following passages, which speak of it as the symbol of the circumcision of the heart, the symbol of the removal of the defilement of our nature, etc., plainly show: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” Col. ii. 11. “I will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children to love the Lord thy God.” Deut. xxx. 6. “The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart.” Deut. x. 15, 16; see also Jer. iv. 14. An uncircumcised heart, therefore, is a heart spiritually corrupt and unclean. Lev. xxvi. 41; Jer. ix. 26; Acts vii. 51. In Rom. ii. 29 the apostle says that the true circumcision was that which the outward ceremony signified. It is that which is inward, of the heart, by the Holy Spirit. This ex-

plains Phil. iii. 3: "We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus," etc. Thus circumcision had a spiritual import. It signified inward purification. As *the baptism of the Spirit* is symbolized by the baptism with water, so the circumcision of the heart (inward purification, cleansing from sin) was symbolized by the circumcision of the flesh. Circumcision, therefore, being the symbol of regeneration, the covenant of which it was the badge was the covenant of grace. That, therefore, which was the badge of the covenant of grace (which covenant God in a visible manner made with his people)—in other words, that which was a badge of Church membership—was applied to infants.

3. The ground taken, that circumcision was not the sign of any spiritual covenant, but that it was the sign exclusively of the national covenant which God made with the Hebrews, is totally irreconcilable with the fact that the people were not formed into a nation until hundreds of years after circumcision was enjoined. It by no means had its origin and commencement when their code of laws was given them on Mount Sinai. It was to the

covenant which God made WITH ABRAHAM, whom the Jews called their father, that the sign of circumcision was attached—the covenant which spake of redemption through Christ.

4. The apostle, in Rom. iv. 11, expressly asserts that circumcision was the seal of the covenant which promised salvation on condition of faith—*i. e.*, of the covenant of grace. For his words in that passage are, “Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised.” The attempt has indeed been made to get over this by this evasion—namely, that the apostle only means that to *Abraham* circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, but *not* to others. This, however, is inconsistent with Paul’s argument in the context, in which he tells the Jews that circumcision was not intended to be the ground of justification, but to give the assurance of God’s favor to *all* those who believe. And yet, although it was in this sense a seal—although it was a seal and badge of Church membership—it was administered to infants.

The question has been asked whether the

Jews must not have wondered why the seal of the covenant was so ordered as to be administered only to males. Probably they understood that females were represented in the males. They could not have inquired why females had no place given them in the visible Church, for they knew that they had such a place given them. Their position as church members by right of birth was well understood. In this respect they and male children were treated alike. The Jews well knew that it was God's will that parents should represent their children, according to which principle the parent makes the same profession for all his children which he makes for himself, so that, if a parent enters into covenant with God, he covenants also for his children.

We know the Jews' construction of the intent and requirement of the law, and that all Hebrew children (male and female) were incorporated into the Church. Even among the Jews of the old dispensation baptism was in use. And when a Gentile became a proselyte, all the females in his family were baptized, while baptism was superadded to circumcision in the case of males. It was thus

evident that females were regarded as members of the Church and entitled to the privileges of the covenant.

Since, then, infants were by God's command members of the visible Church under the old economy, and since the Church was the same under the old that it is under the new dispensation, infants under the new dispensation are also church members.

We, however, repeat what we have already said—that in asserting the church membership of infants we do not assert their regeneration, nor do we absolutely affirm that they are entitled to be recognized as church members because they have given evidence that they are new creatures which satisfies church officers.

Suppose that in conversing with a friend about Mr. B. I tell my friend that Mr. B. is a member of the Church. I do not thereby affirm that he is regenerated, nor do I even affirm that he is one who was received into the Church because the church officers were satisfied in their minds, upon examining him, that he has been regenerated. I only say that as Mr. B. intelligently professes to have entered into covenant with Christ in

the secresy of his soul—in other words, professes that he has faith in Jesus—and that as he does this without there being anything in his life to contradict his profession, he has a right to be regarded and treated as a member of the Church, and all are bound to recognize his right. Nothing more is necessary to give an adult a right to be regarded and treated as a church member than his making a credible profession. It is not necessary that we should feel satisfied that he is a renewed man. And in like manner it is not necessary that we should feel satisfied in our minds that the infants of believers are regenerated before *they* can have a right to be regarded as church members. Without our knowing whether they are actually renewed or not, they are members of the visible Church when their right to be regarded and treated as such is recognized in consequence of their filial relation to a parent who is a professor of religion. In all cases a parent, when he lays hold of the covenant for himself, lays hold of it for his child also; and it is to be taken for granted that the child is included in the parent's act until the contrary appears—that is, until the child evi-

dently intends to refuse to ratify the parent's act.

To assume that infants are savingly included in the covenant embraced by their believing parents, is not to assume that they are now actually regenerated, but it is to proceed on the assumption that they belong to the invisible Church,\* and that if those who have the charge of them are faithful to them they will hereafter give both their parents and the Church every reason for believing that they are the subjects of a work of grace.

Our doctrine, then, is not that the infants of believing parents are members of the Church because they are regenerated. *Actual* regeneration is not a *sine qua non* to membership in the visible Church. It is, however, to be *presumed* that the infants of God's people are at least of the elect—in other words, are the objects of God's eternal love—and so are in the invisible Church, although we do not *know* that they are; and so, of course, it is *also* to be presumed that they will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit,

\* By the invisible Church is meant, be it remembered, "the whole number that have been, are or *shall be*, gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof."

if they are not already. It is because they are members of Christ's visible body, in the sense which we have now (as we hope) made clear, that they are baptized. They are members by birth, and baptism is the badge of an already-existing church membership. If they are members of Christ's visible body in the sense explained, then, although they cannot *now* perform functions or enjoy privileges proper only to riper years and intelligent piety, yet it will be their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's table on reaching years of discretion.

The preceding argument to prove infant church membership (in the sense explained), derived from the fact that infants were members of the Church under the old economy, is not new. It is old. And yet, though it has often been advanced, it has never been answered. Attempts to answer it have indeed been made, but they have never been successful.

It has been said by some that the law of infant church membership has fulfilled its specified term of time; that it has expired by limitation; that it ceased to operate when the old temporary economy passed away; that, be-



longing to the Mosaic ritual law, it was necessarily abolished when that was abolished.

But infant church membership did not have its origin in the ceremonial law. It was established long before Moses, even when the visible Church was established—that is, when God made his covenant with Abraham. Neither the institution nor the abrogation of the ceremonial law in the least affected the Abrahamic covenant, and it is in that covenant that the charter of the visible Church, as an aggregate of families, is found. All this we have already shown. If infant church membership was never made a part of any merely temporary economy, it cannot have passed away. The family is still the unit of the Church.

It is maintained by others that the conditions of church membership have been so changed from what they were before the advent that the exclusion of infants from the Christian Church is the necessary result. Before the advent the conditions of membership were such that both the regenerate and the unregenerate could possess them, whereas, since the advent, the conditions can only be possessed by the regenerate. Therefore, al-

though, under the old economy, the filial relation to a parent who was a professor of religion might easily have been a condition of membership, it cannot be such in the Church that now is, since no mortal can tell whether an infant of a professor is regenerate or not.

But the assertion that there has been a change in the terms of admission into the Church is altogether gratuitous. No change has ever been revealed. As the terms under the old dispensation were a credible profession of faith in the true religion; a promise of obedience; and submission to the appointed rite of initiation, so under the new they are nothing more than a credible profession of faith, the promise of obedience to Christ and submission to baptism as the rite of initiation. In these New Testament times, therefore, as was the case under the former economy, *both the regenerate and the unregenerate* may possess the requisite conditions of admission into the *visible* Church. "Every sincere Israelite really received Jehovah as his God and relied upon all his promises, and especially upon the promise of redemption through the seed of Abraham. He not only bound himself to obey the law of God

as then revealed, but sincerely endeavored to keep all his commandments. Those who were Israelites only in name or form, or, as the apostle expresses it, were Jews outwardly, *made the same professions and engagements*, but did so only with the lips, and not with the heart. If any from among the heathen assayed to enter the congregation of the Lord, they were received upon the terms above specified and to a place equal to (and in some cases better than) that of sons and daughters. If any Israelite renounced the religion of his fathers, he was cut off from among the people. *All this is true in reference to the Church that now is."*

Some there are who insist that Christ gave a command no longer to consider the children of believers as members of the Church. They admit that he did not do this in express terms, but they maintain that such a command is implied in the institution by him of baptism just before his ascension. They maintain that when Christ instituted this sacrament, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," he taught that under the new dispensation none are to be baptized—*i. e.*, be recognized as church mem-

bers—except such as are capable of believing. He, however, taught no such thing, unless he also taught that none are to be *saved* except such as are capable of believing, for his words are just as truly “He that is baptized shall be saved” as they are “He that *believeth* shall be saved.” The truth is, his words had no reference to infants. It is not of *them* that he requires profession of faith in order to baptism, but of adults.

That our Lord did not design to teach us, when he instituted baptism, that under the new dispensation the law of infant church membership is annulled, is also plain from the consideration that his words, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” no more prove that only adults capable of believing are to be baptized, and thus recognized as church members, than the declaration of the Abrahamic covenant in Old Testament times, “He that believeth and is circumcised shall be saved,” proves that only adults capable of believing were to be circumcised. It will not do, therefore, to insist that we may properly infer from the words of Christ, when he instituted the sacrament of baptism, that the law of infant church

membership was by him repealed. And as no such inference could have been drawn from Christ's words by the apostles any more than by us, we know what course the apostles *must* have pursued in their labors to build up the Church. They had been brought up to look upon the infants of those who professed the true religion as church members, this having always been the doctrine and practice of the whole Jewish Church from the time of Abraham. They, moreover, recognized it to be the law of God, just as other Jews did, that whenever a Gentile was converted and embraced the true religion, he was bound to embrace it for his children as well as for himself, they being regarded as members of the religious community to which the parent joined himself.

The apostles, being imbued with this idea and entertaining no thought suggested by the words of Christ of anything different, are by him commanded to devote themselves to the work of establishing his kingdom, placing the badge of church membership upon all whom they receive into the Church. This is the command which was given them; and now is it supposable, or even conceivable, that

they could have interpreted the command in any other way than as requiring them to baptize not only those who professed to be disciples, but their children also? The question has been well asked whether, if they had been commanded to make disciples by circumcising them, they would not have considered themselves bound to circumcise the children of their converts. "It is plain that the apostles could not fail, in receiving parents, to receive their children also into the Church and to enroll their names in the list of disciples. It was inevitable that they should act on the principle to which they had always been accustomed. When, under the Old Testament, a parent joined the congregation of the Lord, he brought his minor children with him. When, therefore, the apostles baptized the head of a family, it was a matter of course that they should baptize his infant children. We accordingly find that when God opened the heart of Lydia, she was baptized and her household; when the jailer of Philippi believed, he was baptized and all his straightway; and Paul says he baptized the household of Stephanas. *The connection in which these facts are stated*

*renders it plain that the baptism of these families was on the ground of the faith of the parent."*

It is no wonder that they pursued this course, for they were unacquainted with any command of Christ excluding the children of believers from membership in the Church. And if no such command was given, then, if, according to the express will of God, the children of believing parents were included in the Church of old, they are included in it now. This argument would not be conclusive were the kingdom of God under the old dispensation a different Church from the one under the new, but it has been shown that the Church under both dispensations is the same.

## CHAPTER V.

### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.—PARTIAL RE- STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE.

1. MOST of those who object to the recognition of the infants of believers as members of the Church found their objection on the incompetency of infants to profess religion for themselves, and to consecrate themselves to the worship and service of the Lord Jesus. But why is it that no Jew of the old dispensation ever thought of entering his protest against the enrollment of children as members of the Church for the same reason? The Jewish infant could not for himself avouch the Lord to be his God. Surely these objectors ought to be greatly astonished to observe that no Jew ever expressed any dissatisfaction because God (when he entered into covenant with Abraham) promised to give blessings or threatened to deny blessings to the patriarch's unborn descendants, ac-



ording as such descendants should break or keep this covenant.

It is true that infants are incompetent to profess religion for themselves, but they can be represented in their parents. God, we know, renewed at Sinai the covenant with the chosen people, at the same time making the law of Moses the law of the covenant between him and them. But this covenant was not with those of adult age only. On the principle that parents represent their children, it included their little ones. Ex. xix. and xx.; Deut. v. and Deut. xxix. 9-13: "Keep, therefore, the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. Ye stand here this day, all of you, before the Lord your God, your captains of tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is within thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day, that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he

hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."

"The fundamental law of this covenant was the Decalogue. 'The Lord our God,' says Moses, 'made a covenant with us in Horeb, . . . saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image,' etc. Deut. v. 2, 6, 7, 8. The whole people, therefore—the adults for themselves, the parents for their children, and masters for their servants—entered into a solemn covenant with God, in which he promised to be their God and they promised to be his people; to have no other God but Jehovah; to make no graven image to bow to or worship; to keep holy the Sabbath; to honor their fathers and mothers; to do no murder; not to commit adultery; not to steal; not to bear false witness; and not to covet. In this solemn transaction parents acted for their children, as they again were to act for theirs from generation to generation. The parent made for the child a profession of faith and promise of obedience. He introduced his child into

the covenant which he himself embraced, and circumcision, the seal of that covenant, was, therefore, enjoined to be administered to children. The principle is here plainly recognized that the parent represents the child. According to the command of God, the parent was not only authorized, but he was required, to make a profession of faith and promise of obedience in the name of the child, and the child, by God's command, was regarded as having done what his parent did in his behalf, and was accordingly held to the contract."

Not only, however, in the covenant made with the chosen people when they were in the wilderness, but in all the previous covenants which God ever formed with men, the children were included, as being represented in their parents.

2. An objection urged by others is that the New Testament is silent on the subject. This objection has perhaps been anticipated in the preceding chapter. We admit that the New Testament is silent to this extent—that it contains no precept directly instituting the Church membership of infants; but the reason is that such a precept was in no ways

necessary. Since the relation of children to the Church as members had subsisted for centuries without one moment's interruption, and since it was taken for granted that the relation was to continue under the new dispensation, no reason existed why it should be instituted anew. "The silence of the New Testament on this head is altogether in favor of those who maintain that the union of parents with the Church of God includes their children also. But on the supposition that this principle was to operate no longer—that the common interest of children with their parents in God's covenant was to cease—the silence of the New Testament is one of the most inexplicable things which ever tortured the ingenuity of man. When the economy of Moses was to be superseded by that of Jesus Christ, he prepared the way in the most gradual and gentle manner; he showed them from their own Scriptures that he had done only what he had intended and predicted from the beginning; he set before their eyes a comparative view of the two dispensations to satisfy them they had lost nothing, but had gained much, by the exchange. But when he touched them in the point of most exquisite sensi-

bility—when he passed a sword through their souls by cutting off their children from all the interest which they once had in his Church—the heavy mandate is preceded by no warning; is accompanied by no comfort; is followed by nothing to replace the privation; is not even supported by a single reason. It cannot be!

“Conceding, then, to the opposers of our children’s claims as members of the Christian Church all that they ask with regard to the *silence* of the New Testament, that very concession works their ruin. If their views are correct, it could not have been thus silent. The case is now reversed. Instead of *our* producing from the New Testament such a warrant for the privileges of our infant seed as they require, we turn the tables upon them, and insist that they shall produce scriptural proof of God’s having annulled the constitution under which we assert our right. Till they do this our cause is invincible. He once granted to his Church the right for which we contend, and nothing but his own act can take it away. We want to see the act of abrogation. We must see it in the New Testament, for there it is if it is at all.

Point it out, and we have done. Till then we shall rejoice in the consolation of calling upon God as our God and the God of our seed.”\*

3. It is objected by others that great evils have resulted from the recognition of the right of infants to membership in the Church. It is asserted that it has led to the adoption of dangerous errors; as, that the Church is essentially only an external society, that no personal religious experience is really necessary in order to acceptance with God, that children are safe if they are only baptized and connected with the visible Church, etc.

But these errors have been almost entirely confined to those European churches which practice the indiscriminate baptism of the children of all those who were themselves baptized in infancy, whether these latter ever became *communicants* or not, and which, as a consequence, baptize the infants of many who assume obligations and make promises as parents which they have no intention to fulfill, and which they are not qualified to fulfill. Only let parents and churches faithfully

\* *The Church of God*, by Dr. J. M. Mason.

perform all their duties to the little ones—Christ's lambs—and the recognition of the church membership of those infants who are entitled to be recognized as members, would be unaccompanied with the hurtful practices to which allusion has been made.

These evils are not necessary, and they never would have afflicted the Church but for her own supineness and unfaithfulness. It is God's command that we regard and treat the children of his people as included in the Church; and his command is to be obeyed, whatever our fears may be as to the consequences. But were the command always obeyed in the right way, were we to look upon membership as their birthright, and *then*, instead of neglecting them, watch over, and cherish, and train them just as God would have us, our recognition of their real standing would be rewarded with the happiest results.

The evils of which these objectors speak they ascribe to a wrong cause. Professors of religion are fearfully remiss in the duty of watching over, encouraging, praying for, admonishing, warning and instructing each other with tender solicitude. If they faith-

fully performed these duties, those among their number who are self-deceived—never having been truly born again—would be favorably situated for being converted. Many unrenewed professors would be savingly benefited. And did this happy state of things exist in the Church (and it *ought* to exist), more of the children of God's people—children born within the Church—would give clear evidence of piety, and would grow up to be rich blessings to Zion and to the world. For they too would enjoy the "watch and care" received by adult professors of religion.

The family is the unit of the Church, and its most healthful growth is from within. The constant admittance of its maturing children to the Lord's table is its great hope and strength. This is not saying that there are no *other* methods by which Christ's kingdom increases. One way in which it makes progress, is by the conversion and reception into the Church, from the world, of small numbers from time to time. Another way by which it advances is by revivals. Nevertheless, children born within the Church constitute a most important source from which she is to be supplied with communicants. "There is



a fund of increase in the very bosom of the Church." It is so evidently the will of God that his Church should thus grow from within that in the Confessions of the four great divisions of the Christian Church—the Greek, the Latin, the Lutheran, and the Reformed—the children of Christians are spoken of as fully and really members of the visible Church as are their parents.

God never designed that his kingdom should be built up exclusively by revivals. It is our privilege to pray for their frequent recurrence. Perhaps none could be found who would not eagerly give their assent to this. But as far as the children of the covenant are concerned, it would be a great mistake to suppose that God would have us rely on revivals *at all* as the means of *their* salvation. *They* are to be trained up by their parents and by the Church as those already belonging to God. "I doubt not to affirm," says that holy and successful minister of Christ, Richard Baxter, "that a godly education is God's first and ordinary appointed means for the begetting of actual faith and other graces. . . . *The ordinary appointed means for the first actual grace is parents'*

*godly instruction and education of their children."*

It is partly owing to the undue prominence given to revivals, and to the too exclusive dependence on them, that the teachings of the Scriptures in regard to careful Christian nurture, and the ecclesiastical instruction of the young, being a divinely-appointed means of building up the Church, have been so largely lost sight of. When the Holy Spirit converted three thousand souls under Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, that apostle did not forget to remind the people that the children of those baptized were within the covenant. There is no *necessary* tendency in revivals to shut this truth out of the minds of men, but their prevalence has had this effect. In many cases the attention of pastor and people is directed to the one object *exclusively* of bringing on a revival. "If they fail, they are chafed. The pastor gets discouraged, is disposed to blame his people, and the people to blame the pastor. And all the while the great means of good may be entirely neglected. Family training of children and pastoral instruction of the young are almost entirely lost sight

of." Many whose spirits are refreshed and gladdened by the occurrence of revivals rejoice with sadness. They long for the arrival of the day when it will be understood that whenever parents are brought into the Church, whether through revivals or in whatever way, their little ones are also to be enrolled as church members according to God's ordinance and according to his command so clearly revealed in the Bible, and when it will be understood that they are not only to be recognized as members, but are ever after to be watched over, and instructed, and nurtured, and trained, as belonging to God and as entitled to church privileges and discipline.

Those who long and pray for the frequent recurrence of revivals are the very ones to feel a deep interest in the Church's having right views in regard to infant church membership, and in her acting on them. They are the very ones to make the greatest exertions to bring about a correct understanding of the scriptural doctrine in regard to such membership. For they will thereby be instrumental in procuring from God just such *revivals* as they long for. For our heavenly

Father (we cannot doubt it) often withholds revivals just because they have a tendency—which yet they need not have—to make men forgetful of or indifferent to his great ordinance, so dear to his heart, in respect to the Church's children. We may safely believe that glorious revivals would be much more frequently vouchsafed were they unaccompanied by this sad tendency.

4. Some may be ready to object that the Church is now more alive than she has ever been to the necessity of putting forth every exertion for the salvation of those who are confessedly entirely outside of the Church, have no hope, and are without God in the world, but that if she makes so much of infant church membership the result will be that her attention will be drawn off from her duty to these, and she will relax her efforts in their behalf.

How, then, did it happen that no such result followed from men having the true view of the status of baptized children in the days of the apostles, and of the primitive Christians, and of the Reformers? These all regarded the children of Christians as within the Church, and they treated them accord-

ingly, and yet their labors to win souls to Christ were in no degree injuriously influenced by this treatment of the Church's children. The labors of the apostles for the world lying in wickedness are known to all readers of the New Testament. So are the labors of the first Christians known to all who are familiar with the early history of the Church. And the Reformers were incessant in their toils. They strove to gather into the fold the young and the ignorant who had no part in the Lord. They wrote incessantly for the masses, and taught them and preached in every place open to them.

The tendency of the scriptural view and treatment of baptized children is to make good men even *more* faithful to perishing outsiders than *they* are who regard the children of Christians as in no degree different in their position from those of unbelievers. It must be so. He who regards not the individual, but the family, as the unit of the Church must necessarily derive from such a view great encouragement to toil among the masses for the Church's enlargement. Besides all this, is it right to dishonor any ordinance or institution which God has ap-

pointed lest injurious consequences may follow? Whether one is the pastor of a church, or an elder, or the superintendent of a Sabbath-school, or a Sabbath-school teacher, he labors in the wrong way if his course of instruction does not sustain a proper discrimination between the children of the covenant and others. Such children are no better than others; nevertheless, God has made special promises with reference to them, and he requires us to recognize their true relation to the Church. Our part is to obey our blessed Lord, even if we are unable to see what good is to result.

But it may be said that in performing Sabbath-school labors, no discrimination is possible. This we deny. The teacher can and should adapt his labors to the position of the members of his class. If he has children in his class whose parents are godless, he should seek to take the place of such parents. "He should be now a father, now a mother, in Christ to them. By frequent visitations at their houses, by taking them one by one to his own house and praying with them, counseling and instructing them, by providing them with suitable Christian

reading, by writing letters to them, by a holy and happy example (and all this from year to year),—he should supply to the Holy Spirit and to them the means of sanctification.” If others in his class are blessed with God-fearing parents, he can often remind them of their peculiar privileges and responsibilities as children of the covenant. This would not interfere with the duties of the parents of this latter class of children, provided they were really anxious to be faithful parents. It is true enough that many professing parents (alas! does not the remark apply, to some extent, to the Church itself?) altogether misapprehend the real work and mission of the Sabbath-school. In many cases, at least, the instruction of the household is left chiefly to the Sabbath-school teacher.

It may be said that even should the entire Church in all its denominations be brought to consider the position of baptized children to be just what we contend that it is, and to treat them as church members, she would soon slide back to her present attitude of mind in regard to the subject, and *cease* to teach and train them as being already within the Church. She would not

persevere, for her work would impose too heavy burdens and labors upon her. We reply that God could easily preserve her from this unfaithfulness, and would do so in answer to importunate prayer. We admit, however, that it requires far more patience to continue year after year in daily labors for the children than it does to work for revivals. We trust the time is not distant when certain men will be unable to say what, with *some* truth, they say now: "You cannot deny that you profess to regard these children as church members. But you do not believe that they really are. You never treat them as church members. You give them none of the privileges of church members. You do not count them on your list of church members. They do not regard themselves as church members. They are practically as separate from the church as the children of the infidel or the Hottentot."

The visible Church, then, consists in part of children whose parents are believers. We will close the present chapter by very briefly pointing out two points of resemblance between the membership of infants and that of those who only became church members



after reaching maturity, and also one or two points of dissimilarity between the two cases. This will involve a partial restatement of the doctrine which we have been endeavoring to prove.

1. *As to the Condition of Admission into the Church.*—As the Church must receive adults who make a credible profession about whose regeneration it is uncertain, so it must recognize as members the children of believers, even though it knows not whether they are renewed or unrenewed. Here is a point of resemblance. The difference between the two cases is that the adults do not become members until they make a profession of personal faith, whereas the infants of believers are members without a profession made in their own persons.

It is just as it was under the old dispensation. A Gentile who declared himself a convert was not received into the Jewish Church until he himself openly professed his faith, but after his admittance his children were within the Church as soon as they were born, and so their reception into it was not conditioned on their making a profession in their own persons. “As a credible pro-

fession of faith by adults raises the belief at the bar of human judgment that they are members of the invisible Church, are of the elect, are of the redeemed, so the birth of the children of believers is to be accepted as the ground for the belief that they also belong to that number, and they should be regarded and treated accordingly until their own deliberate and persistent conduct destroys the belief."

Negatively, then, the condition of membership in the case of adults and in the case of children is the same. It is *not* actual regeneration. Positively, it is different in the two cases, since in the case of adults it is a profession of personal faith, while, as far as infants are concerned, it is the filial relation to a parent who is a professor.

Still, although the children of Christians are born members of the visible Church and remain members until they deliberately cast themselves out, yet even in their case a personal profession (whereby they accept of the act of their parents when their parents made a profession in their behalf) is necessary before they can be qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper. They would generally,

upon reaching the years of discretion, possess the qualifications for coming to communion, would their parents and the Church only discharge their whole duty to them from their birth. But this act of coming to communion and making a profession of personal faith, is not in their case an act of joining the Church, since previously to its performance their membership is direct and absolute.

2. *As to the Nature of Church Membership.*—It is in both cases precisely the same. The essential sameness of the visible church membership of infants with that of adults, will appear, when we consider that in both cases membership is founded on presumptive membership in the invisible Church—that is, in both cases the right exists of being regarded and treated by men as belonging to the invisible Church. To regard and treat either adults or children in this manner is simply to assume in our minds that they are within the covenant, and to treat them as within it. It is, therefore, to do just what the pious Jews of the old dispensation did, who took it for granted that professors and their children were *both* included in the promises made to the fathers.

“The church relation into which the children are introduced, is the same as that which is assumed on a profession of faith by adults. It entitles them, first and at once, to public recognition as members of the church by the administration of baptism, the badge of that relationship, and then to every right or privilege as soon as they exhibit the requisite qualifications for it. And it imposes upon them every duty which is assumed by a profession of faith. Their membership is as direct and absolute, though not as full, as that of the adult professor. They belong to the particular congregation in which their parents are enrolled. Hence a list of the baptized members, as well as of the communicating members, should be kept by each session, and should be reported from year to year. When parents remove from one charge to another, and are dismissed and recommended as members, their children should also receive their appropriate certificates. They have a divinely-established claim on the care and consideration of the particular church in which their lot is cast.”

It follows, from the church membership

of the children of believers being exactly the same as that of adults, that the church cannot dissolve it for any other cause than would justify her in dissolving the church membership of an adult member.

“As nothing but the outspoken denial of his profession, or a persistent and flagrant course of transgression which points to total apostasy, should lead to the excommunication of a professor, nothing but the deliberate cutting off of themselves can place any of the children of the Church out of its province during their life.

“They are under its government and discipline from the beginning to the end. In their earlier years this must be exercised mainly, though not exclusively, through their parents—not exclusively, for the Church has its direct as well as indirect bearing on them. The object of this government and discipline is to prevent transgression, by nurture, and to correct transgression, by necessary censures. Baptized members have no right to come to communion until they make a profession of personal faith. Until they do this they are like citizens under age, with their rights held in suspension as a just punish-

ment for their refusal to believe. These suspended rights are those of communing and having their children baptized." (Dr. A. A. Hodge, *Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, p. 475.)

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PROMISE OF OUR COVENANT-KEEPING GOD TO BLESS AND SAVE THE CHILDREN OF HIS PEOPLE.

IN the preceding chapters we have endeavored to prove that when men publicly enter into covenant with Christ, and thereby profess religion, they covenant likewise for their children, who thus become members of the visible Church along with their parents. In this chapter we hope to show clearly, that in the promise which our Lord, as the other party to the covenant, makes to professors of his religion he includes their little ones also.

It belongs, however, to the very nature of a covenant to have conditions. The conditions on which the covenant-promise in reference to the salvation of children is suspended, as far as their parents are concerned, are that their parents shall be real believers and not such merely by profession, and that

they train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, at the same time exercising faith in the promise that they shall then be saved.

It ought not to pain or discourage us to learn that these conditions are laid down. When I hear that such a delightful doctrine as this is taught in the Scriptures, I ought not to be disappointed when told further that the promise is a conditional one—that it does not apply to those who fail to use the appointed means for the salvation of their children. No one whose heart is right in the sight of God wishes to be saved in any other way than in that appointed by God, nor will such a one wish his children to be saved in any other way. We cannot make our own terms. We glorify God when, by fulfilling the conditions of the covenant with reference to our offspring, we are the means of their salvation.

But are we warranted, because of this promise, in being confident that all children will be saved whose believing parents are measurably faithful? The reply often given to this is, that the promise does not secure the salvation, without *any* exception,



of such children, because it belongs to that class of promises which are to be regarded as general declarations of the divine purposes, and which are not intended to indicate the issue of any particular case; that the promise has its exceptions, just as the declaration has its exceptions that seed-time and harvest shall continue while the world stands; that, nevertheless, the covenant of grace made with believers so includes their offspring that its promise is an abundant security that as a general rule the children of Christians will receive grace and salvation on the ground of the faith of their parents. Though this view, which is our own, admits that we may sometimes behold exceptions, yet it is full of encouragement and comfort to all believing fathers and mothers. For according to it, if we devoutly train up our children for God, then we may at least as confidently expect their salvation, as the husbandman the harvest.

#### GOD IS ABLE TO PROMISE THIS.

Many, in consequence of certain unscriptural views which they have adopted, are unable to believe that faith in covenant-

promises has anything to do with the salvation of children. They must, if consistent, hold it to be impossible for God to promise parents that he will renew their children, since, according to their view, the regeneration of men is not God's work; it is man's work. Every sinner has plenary power to change his own heart, and therefore to look to God to effect this change is a great mistake. According to these views, there is no place for a covenant-promise touching this matter; and if God has made such a promise, the parent cannot rely on it. For it is the sinner, and he alone, who can do the work.

There are others who are willing to acknowledge that it partly belongs to the Holy Spirit to regenerate the soul, but who deny that this change is his work exclusively. They maintain that the soul must co-operate with the Holy Spirit in effecting the great change. They admit that our nature is morally deteriorated to some extent, but the total spiritual death of the soul they by no means admit, and therefore they deny the entire inability of the natural man to that which is spiritually good.

According to the views of these persons, also, it would be impossible for God to promise us the regeneration and salvation of our children; and anything like a connection between the piety of parents and that of their children is out of the question, because *such* a connection implies that the regeneration of a soul may be effected by causes independent of and prior to the decision of the soul's own will. To hope for and expect the regeneration of our children *simply because God has promised it to us* supposes that nothing short of a divine supernatural energy, unattended by the soul's own co-operation, can make the soul morally good.

Dr. Bushnell's book on Christian nurture discusses with great power the organic life of the family, the connection between the faith of the parent and that of the child, and the importance of Christian nurture as the means of building up the Church; and we expect to advert again to the teachings of his book,\* on some accounts so valuable. We would only remark here that he also holds errors in regard to the state of

\* *Christian Nurture*, by Horace Bushnell. New York, 1871.

human nature which involve a denial that parents are in any need of covenant promises with reference to their children's salvation. Instead of recognizing the scriptural truth that the Holy Spirit regenerates the soul by operating upon it in a supernatural way, he attributes to the parental character and nurture as an organic power an influence fully adequate to the child's regeneration. It is not on God's covenant promise, therefore, according to him, that we are to rest our expectations touching the conversion and salvation of our offspring.

If the new creation of the soul is not solely and exclusively the work of God—if it is partly man's work—how could God ever promise you that he will renew your children? How could he ever enter into a covenant with his people to save their little ones? And what meaning would there be in talking about our having faith in a covenant promise? You must confide in the declarations of Scripture concerning the state of human nature. If you are in error as to the total depravity of the soul and its consequent entire inability to originate spiritual life in itself, you will fail to see that God

has every human spirit entirely in his own hands, to regenerate it or not as he wills; and failing to see this, you cannot rely on God's promise to save your children.

While the Bible does not affirm that all men are equally wicked, or that any man is as thoroughly corrupt as it is possible for one to be, or that men are not in a greater or less degree honest in their dealings with each other and kind in their feelings toward each other, it *does* teach that the apostasy of all men from God is total or complete—that each man is, until God changes his heart, entirely destitute of holiness, of any principle of spiritual life. Though this is not our normal and original condition, since Adam was created holy, yet now it is the state of all men at birth. We are a fallen race. We are by nature the children of wrath, and we come into this world in a state of spiritual death. From this state we can do nothing to deliver ourselves. In God alone is our help, and it is only when we fully believe this that we can trust in God's promise to deliver and save our children.

Your children, then, are by nature under condemnation and totally destitute of spirit-

ual life. But provided you yourself have faith and may rightfully look upon yourself as belonging to Christ, you may fully expect that the Holy Spirit will work faith also in your children, if you carefully bring them up for God, and unite them to the Saviour. Faithfully use the means which God has commanded you to use, and then, if you would not be guilty of doubting the promise of the covenant, confidently expect that a saving work will be begun in their souls and carried on to its completion.

What we are intent upon is not simply to advocate the doctrine that pious parents who are faithful may be expected to have pious children, but to hold up the precious truth that the salvation of their offspring is a **THING OF PROMISE**—that in the covenant which God enters into with the believing parent the promise of eternal life is for his child as much as for himself.

In professing Christ before men and becoming a member of the visible Church, you by your own act covenanted for your child as well as for yourself. And God, on the other hand, covenanted and promised to bless your child. We repeat it that, provided God's

people do their part and use the appointed means, the salvation of their children is a thing of promise, and the promise is that on which they should rely.

THE PRINCIPAL PASSAGES WHICH CONTAIN  
THE PROMISES.

But what are the precise words in which the promise to save our children is given? Where are the words of the promise to be found? They are to be found in many parts of the Bible, but it is sufficient to refer to the following passages. In the covenant made with Abraham, God said (Gen. xvii. 7), *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.* Every Hebrew understood this to be a promise to bless and save not only himself, but his children; and indeed it is sufficiently plain. It is, however, repeated on various occasions in the most explicit terms. Thus in Deut. xxxix. 6 it is said, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest*

*live. The mercy of the Lord, says the Psalmist (ciii. 17, 18), is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. It is striking that God describes himself as a covenant-keeping God, and proclaims that generation after generation of those that fear him shall have evidence of his fidelity. Thus (Deut. vii. 9), Know therefore that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations. What could be more explicit than the words of the prophet Isaiah (lix. 21)?—As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. What a blessing to be connected with those who are in covenant with God! The promise is, To thee and thy seed after thee. When the apostle Peter uttered these words (Acts ii. 39), he only announced*



a truth with which his hearers were all familiar. Nothing could be plainer than these declarations of the Bible. They cannot be misunderstood. You have, believer, the promise that if you bring up your children for God he will give them his Spirit, renew their hearts, and save them for ever.

THE PROMISE IS ALSO IMPLIED IN THE  
COMMANDS WHICH GOD LAYS UPON PA-  
RENTS.

We have shown in the former part of this little book that God commands not only the Church in general, but parents, to give their children a place in the visible Church—*i. e.*, to recognize their right to such a place. But in commanding this external relationship, God virtually promises that higher *spiritual* relationship *which alone gives value* to the external relationship.

God commands the baptism of the children of believing parents. But what is baptism? By the admission of all, it is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace. What, then, does its being attached to infants prove? It proves that they are within the covenant, that they are the subjects of its promises,

that for them the promise of the Holy Spirit and of every blessing included in eternal life are meant.

HOW CAN THE LACK OF INTEREST IN THIS  
PRECIOUS PROMISE BE EXPLAINED?

The explanation of the manifest want of heart-interest in these precious assurances of God on the part of not a few professedly Christian parents, is that they are themselves still unrenewed. Though unrenewed men who have been born in a Christian community, and have been taught from infancy to revere the Bible, may readily admit that it is a divine revelation, and may assent to its claims without reluctance, nevertheless they are and must be indifferent to "the things of the Spirit." Divine things have no attraction for them. They do not feel their power because they are unable to see their glory and sweetness and adaptation to the wants of sinful, weak, helpless souls. To the doctrines, directions, encouragements, warnings, cautions, exhortations and entreaties of the word of God, to its descriptions and praises of God's perfections, blessedness, works, attributes, love for sinners, and of

his infinitely glorious and mysterious plan for saving lost sinners, they are utterly and totally indifferent. They are indifferent to everything that relates to God—to everything God has said and has promised. One would think that God's loving promises and encouragements, intended for weak, erring mortals sensible in some measure of their wants, would impress and arouse them. Most unregenerate men are at times in some measure sensible of their wants, but to divine things they are insensible and indifferent. They cannot feel interested in them. Now, God's kind promises to his people with reference to their children are to be classed among the "things of the Spirit"—divine things; and this, with the fact that many professing parents have never been born again, but are still unrenewed, is no doubt the reason why many professing parents feel no interest in such promises and are unaffected by them. We need not expect that unconverted members of the Church, who have children, will be moved and roused to action by God's promises to bestow spiritual blessings upon children. These, we repeat it, are to be classed among "the things of the Spirit," but the

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit.

But even many parents who are not destitute of piety are to an extent truly wonderful indifferent to the promises which God makes to believing parents. Could it be so if they possessed *vigorous* piety? May it not be the case that as the unregenerate state of some parents who are professors accounts for their being totally indifferent to all spiritual things, and *therefore* to the promises touching children, so the lukewarmness and want of spirituality of *other* parents who are not really graceless explain the feebleness with which they respond to the directions and promises intended for believers who sustain the parental relation? Would not the simple increase of the piety of such worldly-minded fathers and mothers be sufficient to deepen their interest in all that God says to Christian parents with reference to their offspring?

But there is another explanation of this lack of interest. Parents, whether pious or not, cannot feel an interest in the divine promise to bless their children if they do not believe that any such promise exists, and

they are constrained to disbelieve that such a promise exists if they sincerely deny the possibility of the church membership of children. Let us suppose that I, a parent, profess religion and enter into covenant with God for myself, promising faith and obedience to Christ. Now, if I deny that my children are by this act of mine introduced into the visible Church, then I deny that I am the representative of my little ones. I deny that it is my duty to make promises in their behalf binding them to exercise faith and yield obedience upon their becoming independent moral agents, and I deny that they begin to sustain a covenant relation to God based on my own faith and spiritual life. But it is utterly impossible to deny and disbelieve all this, and at the same time believe that God specially promises to bless my little ones and give them eternal life. And disbelieving the existence of such a promise, how can I feel an interest in it?

In regard to a feeling of interest in this class of the divine promises, we must expect to see professing parents in this respect what their own parents were before them. It may be that when those who have now become

heads of families were *themselves* children, their own parents paid little heed to those Scripture assurances which are so adapted to encourage and stimulate Christian fathers and mothers. If this was the case, is it surprising that, now that *they* sustain the parental relation, they in their turn show the same indifference to these assurances of the covenant? They do but follow the bad example set before *them* in their early days. Nothing has happened to them during their past lives (unless they have since reaching maturity enjoyed the blessing of being well instructed by a faithful ministry) to arouse their attention to the covenant promise which includes the little ones. These promises, therefore, even if read, are not attended to, and perhaps it is not known that they are to be found in the Bible at all.

But though they are so often disregarded, even by Christian parents, it cannot be denied that they are set before us with great prominence in the Bible, and it is our duty and privilege to plead them; and in reliance upon them we are warranted to expect that our children will, through the divine blessing upon our faithful efforts, grow up the

children of God. He is not a well-informed Christian who does not know that these gracious promises of God have been abundantly recognized by all branches of the Reformed Church, as contained in the Bible. They have united in teaching that since infants as well as their parents are included in the covenant and Church of God, and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, is promised to them no less than to their parents, they must also be admitted into the Christian Church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done under the old covenant.

#### THE WHOLE MEANING OF THE PROMISE.

The promise of our covenant God is not merely that our children shall become Christians some time before they die. It is much more comforting than that. It is that if we precede their birth with strong crying and prayer for them, and that if afterward we are perseveringly faithful to them in the matter of their Christian nurture, they shall grow up Christians. Just this is what the promise encourages us to expect. Among the many passages which contain by implication this

gracious promise to parents is this: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. vi. 4. Bushnell justly says that this form of expression indicates the existence of a divine nurture encompassing the child and moulding him unto God, so that he shall be brought up, as it were, in him. Certainly, God's promise means something more than that the children of his people are to grow up for future conversion.

One of Bushnell's propositions is that, according to God's plan, the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise. He does not err in maintaining that this doctrine, so far from being a novelty, is as old as the Christian Church. But he is faulty in that he makes no attempt to show that the reason, and the sole reason, why this precious doctrine is to be received, is that God has promised that the children of faithful parents shall grow up in piety. He makes little of God's promise to parents. And no wonder; for it is the doctrine of his book that as the parent plant transmits its life to the seed by organic natural law, so by a similar process the spiritual life of the pious parent flows to his offspring. It is



not the teaching of his book, however, that this *alone* is sufficient, for he admits, and even insists, that to the power of the life of the parent there must be added the power of Christian nurture; indeed, the necessity of such nurture is set forth throughout his whole book with great ability and eloquence. Then, when Christian nurture is all that it should be, we may confidently expect the steady growth of the child in holiness and Christian loveliness. Thus, notwithstanding his assertions to the contrary, he seems to exclude an influence of the Holy Spirit which is properly supernatural. And he also fails to rest the connection between the piety of parents and that of their offspring on God's covenant promise—a promise conditioned, of course, on the use, on the part of the parent, of the divinely-appointed means.

But, as already intimated, he has a solid scriptural basis for his position that we ought to expect the children of God's people, provided they are brought up in the nurture of the Lord, to grow up Christians without their ever being able to remember when they first began to love God.

“God,” he says, “does expressly lay it

upon us to expect that our children will grow up in piety under the parental nurture, and assumes the possibility that such a result may ordinarily be realized. According to all that he has taught us concerning his own dispositions, he desires on his part that children should grow up in piety as earnestly as the parent can desire it—nay, as much more earnestly as he hates sin more intensely.

“All Christian parents would like to see their children grow up in piety; and the better Christians they are, the more earnestly they desire it. But why should a Christian parent, the deeper his piety, be led to desire more earnestly what is impossible? And if it be generally seen that the children of such persons are more likely to become Christians early, what forbids the hope that if they were riper still in their piety, living a more Christ-like life and more cultivated in their views of family nurture, they might see their children grow up always in piety toward God? Moreover, since it is the distinction of Christian parents that they are themselves in the nurture of the Lord, since Christ and the divine love are become the food of their life, what will they so naturally seek as to have

their children partakers with them—heirs together with them in the grace of life?

“What authority have you from Scripture to tell your child or by any sign to show him that you do not expect him truly to love and obey God till after he has spent whole years in hatred and wrong? Perhaps you do not give him to expect that he is to grow up in sin; you only expect that he will yourself. That is scarcely better, for that which is your expectation will assuredly be his.

“This doctrine is not a novelty now rashly and for the first time propounded. I will show you before I have done that it is as old as the Christian Church. Neither let your own experience raise a prejudice against it. If you have endeavored to realize the very truth I here affirm, but find that your children do not exhibit the character you have looked for, you are not to conclude that the doctrine I here maintain is, of course, untrue or impracticable. . . . Have you nothing to blame in yourselves—no lack of faithfulness, no mistake of duty which with a better and more cultivated piety you would have been able to avoid? Have you been so nearly even with your privilege and duty

that you can find no relief but to comfort yourselves in the conviction that God has *appointed* the failure you deplore? When God marks out a plan of parental nurture, you will see at once that he could not base it on a want of piety in you or on any imperfection of manner flowing from defective piety. Then, again, has there been no fault of piety in your church, no carnal spirit visible to your children and imparting its noxious and poisonous quality to the Christian atmosphere in which they have had their nurture? For it is not for you alone to realize all that is included in the idea of Christian education. It belongs to the Church of God to bear a part of the responsibility with you."

That God's promise to convert the children of believing parents who are faithful, is a promise to renew them at an early age is (in addition to what has been said) rendered more than probable by the following considerations.

Our heavenly Father knows that when a soul is brought home at the beginning of life's journey it escapes a thousand snares which would otherwise endanger its salva-

tion, and which have caused the destruction of multitudes. Evil companions, corrupting books, and ruinous errors which are always afloat, give the adversary immense advantage, and are used by him with dreadful effect. Multitudes fall victims to evil habits in which they never would have indulged had they been the subjects of grace in childhood. Moreover, unless good habits are cultivated very early, it is exceedingly difficult to become fixed in them. All experience shows that the older a person is, the harder it is to forsake old ways and enter upon new ones; and unless habits of daily and systematic secret prayer, resolute conflict with sin in its various forms, liberality to the cause of Christ, watchfulness, and others of a similar kind, are formed in the morning of life, it is exceedingly doubtful whether they will ever become strong, even supposing the effort to form them be subsequently made. All this our covenant God knows when he cheers our hearts by promising to renew and bless our children.

One converted to God in childhood will probably before the end of his life make far greater attainments in holiness than he would

have made had he remained an unconverted person until a later period. For while it is true that sanctification can be promoted in no other way than by union to Christ, by which we become partakers of his Holy Spirit, yet it is not to be forgotten that the Christian graces will never grow unless they are exercised, and that they become stronger the more they are exercised. How much greater advantages, then, than others do *they* possess for attaining to great excellence who begin in childhood to practice the graces of faith and humility and love to God and man!

There is, moreover, an intimate connection between knowledge of the truth, and holiness, so that, other things being equal, they who are most familiar with divine truth will make the greatest progress in religion. But let one become a subject of God's grace in the beginning of his days, and then, in consequence of his thirsting for the sincere milk of the word so early in life, he will be likely to advance rapidly in his knowledge of the word. Surely, if the belief that our children shall be made new creatures some time before they die is fitted to refresh and comfort our

hearts, our souls must be still more gladdened by an expectation (one which it is believed the Scriptures encourage us to cherish) that they will be renewed while yet young, and will grow up Christians. Can it, then, be that God, who knows our longings, can mean anything less by his promise than their *early* conversion and sanctification?

Then, again, as *we* do not forget the truth that the early conversion of our children would shorten the period of their subjection to the dominion of sin, neither is our heavenly Father insensible to it. For children are born with a depraved nature, and can only be delivered from the dominion of sin by the regenerating act of the Holy Spirit.

The years which are spent unprofitably to ourselves are spent unprofitably to others. It is not until the kingdom of Christ has been set up in our own souls, and we are engaged in nourishing the gracious principle implanted there, that we are disposed or fitted to seek the highest welfare of our fellow-men. Here, then, is another consideration which makes it probable in the highest degree that the divine promise to regenerate and sanctify our offspring is to be interpreted

as meaning their early conversion and sanctification. While they are unrenewed their influence is only for evil, and until holy affections find a home in their hearts they neither can, nor will, employ their powers in the service of Christ.

But if any are disposed to think that it makes very little difference in regard to one's usefulness in subsequent life whether he is renewed in childhood or at a later period, it will at least be admitted that his becoming the subject of gracious influences while very young will facilitate his entering upon that employment or profession which will be most in accordance with the will of God, and which will most conduce to his usefulness. They only who are governed by religious principle have their own usefulness in view when they choose that employment in which they expect to spend their days. They alone seek the direction of God in the matter. If, then, our children are thus under the influence of love to God and their fellow-men while they are very young, they will be almost certain to enter upon those pursuits in which they will do the most good, and God will bless them and their labors. Should



it be his will that they engage in the ministry of reconciliation, they will choose that for their life-work.

Add to this if it is really the plan of God that the Church should grow from within in the truest sense of the word, it must be his will that our offspring should be renewed, not late in life, but in childhood.

It is doubtless true, then, as Bushnell says, that God lays it upon us to expect that our children will grow up in piety under the parental nurture, and assumes the possibility that such a result may ordinarily be realized. The child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise. It is to be remembered, however—and it is this which Bushnell loses sight of—that the means used by their parents and by the church for their spiritual welfare have a relation to the peculiar position which they occupy as children of the covenant. The fact, which is so precious, of the connection between the faith of parents and the salvation of their offspring is founded on nothing else than God's promise. God promises his people that he will be a God to them and to their seed after them—that his

Spirit, which is upon them, will be upon their children.

What is the promise which God made to Abraham, and which was subsequently repeated with still greater explicitness to the members of the Jewish Church by their inspired teachers, Moses, David, Isaiah and others, and which Peter again presented to his hearers on the day of Pentecost? It is this: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be a God to thee and thy seed after thee."

Now, it is intended that each Christian parent should make use of this promise. And as it would involve a contradiction to deny that the offspring of believing parents are members of the visible Church, while admitting that they are within the covenant into which their parents enter with God, so the covenant-promise holds out to them the expectation that their little ones will, if they are faithful, grow up in piety.

SOME OF THE REASONS WHY SO MANY CHILDREN OF PROFESSORS OF RELIGION PERISH.

We are not to attribute the ruin of those who perish, notwithstanding their parents are members of the church, to the failure of God's promise, for some heads of families, though members of the church, live and die unconverted. To such professors of religion no promise has ever been made.

As a general thing, these unconverted parents are not even formalists. They live without thought. They live carelessly even as to the externals of religion.

Some of them, however, are formalists, mistake the nature of religion, and suppose that it consists in knowledge and in being exemplary as to church duties and outward conduct. These latter unrenewed parents who are church members—these formalists—may not only be careful to have their children baptized, but to have them instructed also. Perhaps mistaken ideas of duty lead them likewise to subject their families to irksome and injurious restraints. And all this time they are satisfied and at ease be-

cause they and their children are included in the Church. They are like many of the Jews of old, who thought themselves safe because they were circumcised and were strict in observing the duties prescribed in the ritual.

Yes, the children of unconverted professors may be baptized, taught the catechism and instructed and restrained, and thus grow up well informed, while yet, like their parents, they are destitute of all true religion, and while they even deny that there is any religion beyond an orthodox faith and moral conduct. This is a great evil. It is not, however, to be avoided by going to the opposite extreme, and by denying all peculiarity of relation between the children of believers and the God of their fathers. There is no security from any evil but the grace of God and the real life of religion in the Church. On the one hand, the covenant should not be neglected, nor, on the other, should external formal assent to it be considered as all that is necessary. Our safety consists in adhering to the word of God, believing what he has said, doing what he has commanded, and at the same time looking constantly for the vivifying presence and power of his

Spirit. Our children, if properly instructed, will not be ignorant of the difference between obedient and disobedient children of the covenant. They will be aware that if insincere in their professions or unfaithful to their engagements, they are only the more guilty and exposed to a severer condemnation.

It is, in short, evident enough that God is not to be charged with forgetting his promise when the children of church members perish. He has not bound himself to save the offspring of irreligious professors, though—blessed be his name!—even such are not beyond hope.

But even when parents are not mere formalists—even when, besides being church members, they are true believers, Christians in reality—we are by no means shut up to the necessity of attributing the ruin of their children, should these come short of eternal life, to the failure of the divine promise. For the covenant has its conditions, and it will be found that in the cases now supposed the conditions have not been fulfilled. These parents, however sincere in their piety, have had little or no belief in God's promise. Indeed, perhaps the promises intended for be-

lieving parents have never made any impression on their minds—have never even been known to be contained in the Bible. Besides *this* failure—viz., want of faith in the covenant—they have failed to fulfill its conditions in *other* ways. They have neglected parental duties. They have not sufficiently prayed for their little ones. They have not with unspeakable pains and tender solicitude brought up their children for God. In consequence of overrating the importance of the things which are seen and temporal, the time which should have been devoted to the instruction of their children has been given to employments not really necessary. Even to pious parents the promise does not apply if they neglect to use the means for the conversion and sanctification of their offspring which God has especially appointed.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME OF THE  
CONDITIONS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF  
WHICH THE PROMISE IS SUSPENDED AS  
FAR AS THE PARENT IS CONCERNED.

There are degrees of faithfulness in bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Some fathers and mothers

may not equal others in this fidelity, while yet they cannot be fairly charged with violating the condition on which the promise is suspended. We shall not, therefore, endeavor to be very precise in showing when you fulfill the conditions to be performed before the promise can apply to you. Every parent will be successful in his attempts to ascertain for himself what God would have him do who searches the Scriptures for the purpose of ascertaining.

We are safe in saying that the promise is not meant for those who do not believe in it. You fail to perform a most important condition unless you exercise faith in God's covenant engagements with reference to your children—a faith which will rouse you to action.

Recognizing them as thus included in the covenant, in order that you may be entitled to plead the promise, you must pray for them—not only with them, but for them—and that early and late, and without ceasing, and with holy boldness, with arguments and tears. If many children disappoint parental hopes, notwithstanding they have been well instructed, it may be because too little prayer was

offered for them. You solemnly engaged, when you presented your children for baptism, thus to pray for them. If you keep your promise, you will never let a day pass without earnest pleadings with God to give them his Holy Spirit. Your pleadings will ascend from your hearts often during the day, even while your little ones are gathered around you, little thinking of your solicitude on their account, and in the stillness of the night, when they are locked in slumber. You do not truly love them if you cannot intercede for them. We should not see so *few* early conversions among the children of God's people if parents would thus pray. The promise of our Saviour would be fulfilled: "Ask, and ye shall receive."

But we are not to suppose that prayer will evoke the Holy Spirit's power in their behalf if we do not exert ourselves to instruct them. There is no duty which God more expressly commands parents to perform than that of diligently teaching their children the truths of his word. The soul cannot be saved without knowledge of the truth, and the necessity of such knowledge exists in the case of the children of Christians no less than in the



case of others. And it must be imparted to them early. "Not by chance, not at interrupted and infrequent seasons, but patiently and humbly and week by week, that wonderful and eternal book must be opened before them. Its sublime yet simple truths, plain to the child's understanding, its grand prophets and ardent apostles, its venerable patriarchs and its inspired children, must all pass in their robes of light and forms of majesty and beauty before the child. Its psalms must be sung into his soul. Its beatitudes and commandments must be fixed in his remembrance. Its parables must engage his fancy. Its miracles must awaken his wonder. Its cross and ark, and all its sacred emblems, must people his imagination. Without that Bible no child born among us can come to Him whom only the Bible reveals."\*

This early, assiduous and faithful instruction in Bible truth, is a large part of that nurture which is intended when parents are commanded to bring up their children in the nurture of the Lord. Many who are convinced that it is a duty which God requires

\* *Sermons for the People*, by F. D. Huntington, D.D., p. 205.

of them still neglect it. And because they are conscious of neglect, they cannot hear or read these words of God without self-condemnation and reproach: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." If, however, their children are still young, let them at once begin the work, remembering for their encouragement that God has engaged to render such nurture effectual, since it is in connection with his command thus to bring them up for him, that he promises to be their God, give his Spirit and renew their hearts. When you presented your child for baptism, you *promised* thus to instruct it.

Restraining our children is another important element of that parental faithfulness which God requires. Merely to expostulate with them will not suffice. The tenderness and impressiveness of Eli's expostulations with his sons could hardly be exceeded, but God was still displeased with him because he *restrained* them not. That steady exercise of

authority which trains a child to habits of obedience is a means of grace to him. It is a means which God has appointed. To keep them under proper restraint is what you have engaged to do. If with holy solicitude and love you endeavor to restrain them wisely and at proper seasons, you will then also be led to be watchful over them for the purpose of guarding them from evil influences. It is difficult effectually to guard our little ones from evil influences in such a world as this, but many professing Christians do not even *try*. They do not make companions of their children, and encourage free communications on all subjects, and sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows. They never exercise a firm but mild discipline. They pay no heed to the declarations and warnings of the wisest and best of books. "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." They do not watch their children to know whether they are indulging in habits of sin.

But however faithfully these duties may be fulfilled, you cannot be in a position to plead the promise with confidence, nor can you have much hope of success in your ef-

forts to save your children, unless the silent, unconscious influence of your character of itself has power (instrumentally, of course) to form them unto holiness. They must be moulded by your own Christian, holy life. We should ever remember that during our children's earliest years their spirits are exquisitely susceptible of impression, and that "God does not hold us responsible *only* for the effect of what we do or teach or for acts of control and government, but quite as much for the effect of our being what we are; that there is a plastic age in the house, receiving its type, not from our words, but from our *spirit*—one whose character is shaping in the moulds of our own."

Grace alone can originate holiness in the souls of the young, and yet your inward character in many of its forms will reproduce itself in your offspring. Parents and children of the same family partake of a common life; and it must be so. It is a law. This is what Bushnell means by the organic unity of the family. He says, "All society is organic—the Church, the State, the school, the family; and there is a spirit in each of these organisms peculiar to itself and, to some

extent at least, sovereign over the individual man. We possess only a mixed individuality all our life long. A pure, separate, individual man, living *wholly* within and from himself, is a mere fiction. No such person ever existed, or ever can. The child is only more within the power of organic laws than we all are. I need not say that this view of an organic connection subsisting between parent and child lays a basis for notions of Christian education far different from those which, alas! now prevail."

The last sentence of this passage deserves to be profoundly considered, but it is a very hurtful error to teach, as Bushnell does, that by organic natural law the *holy* character of pious parents is transmitted to children just as other forms of character are. In no case is piety or spiritual life transmitted from parent to child. If a child is found to be truly holy in his character, we know that he became holy—in other words, became a new creature—by an operation of the Holy Spirit. Nothing short of an influence above nature—a supernatural influence—ever brought a human soul from the condition of spiritual death in which it began its existence into a

state of spiritual life. In the case of some children the effectual work of the Spirit may antedate the intellectual apprehension of the truth, and some doubtless are sanctified from the womb and from baptism; but at whatever period one may have passed from death unto life, the change could only have been wrought in him by that mighty power which wrought in Christ when it raised him from the dead.

Still, we do not affirm that the holy character of a good parent exhibited in manifold ways in the presence of his child cannot in any way influence him for good through the operation of organic law. While there is no natural law by which the likeness of a parent, as far as its Christian graces are concerned, descends into his child, yet the constant exhibition of the lovely fruits of the Spirit may, and often do, in virtue of the laws which God has stamped upon the social element of the soul, have a powerful influence on the young for good and prepare them for the saving work of the Spirit.

It is for this reason that the example of a holy life is necessary. Not only must your children be thoroughly instructed in the truths of the Bible, unceasingly prayed for

and restrained, but they must be subjected to the subtle and powerful influence which reigns in every house in which the parents are holy and spiritually-minded. Your real aim and study must be to be the means of infusing into them a new life, and to this end the life of God must perpetually reign in *you*. “Gathered round you as a family, they are all to be so many motives strong as the love you bear them to make *you* Christlike in *your* spirit. It must be seen and felt with them that religion is a first thing with *you*. And religion must be first, not in words and talk, but visibly first in your love—that which fixes your aims, feeds your enjoyments, sanctifies your pleasures, supports your trials, satisfies your wants, contents your ambition, beautifies and blesses your character. This is Christian education, the nurture of the Lord.”

The Christian parent is truly obeying the divine injunction to bring up his children in the nurture of the Lord who thus by his own holy living exerts an influence upon them for good. This influence our little ones can feel even before reason is developed, since even during that early period they are

under the power of the parent's character and spirit. "Observe," says Bushnell in a chapter of his work entitled *When and Where Nurture Begins*, "how very quick the child's eye is in the passive age of infancy to catch *impressions* and receive the meaning of looks, voices and motions. It peruses all faces and colors and sounds. Every sentiment that looks into its eyes looks back out of its eyes and plays in miniature on its countenance. The tear that steals down the cheek of a mother's suppressed grief gathers the little infantile face into a responsive sob. . . . If the child is handled fretfully, scolded, jerked or simply laid aside unaffectionately in no warmth of motherly gentleness, it feels the sting of just that which is felt toward it; and so it is angered by anger, irritated by irritation, fretted by fretfulness, having thus impressed just that kind of impatience or ill nature which is felt toward it, and growing into the bad mould offered as by a fixed law. There is great importance in the manner even in the handling of infancy." Again: "The child is open to *impressions* from everything he sees. His character is forming under a principle, not of choice, but of nurture.



The spirit of the house is breathed into his nature day by day. The anger and gentleness, the fretfulness and patience, the appetites, passions and manner, all the variant moods of feeling exhibited around him, pass into him as *impressions* and become seeds of character in him, not because the parents will, but because it must be so whether they will or not. They propagate their own evil in the child, not by design, but under a *law* of moral infection. The spirit of the house is in the members by nurture, not by teaching, not by any *attempt* to communicate the same, but because it is the air the children breathe."

We are hardly in danger of overrating the power of parental treatment and influence even before the development of reason in our children, and we may be sure that if our spirit is always a Christian spirit in their presence previously to that development, and that if afterward and during all the periods of their childhood and youth our example before them is holy, the nurture which they receive from us is most blessed.

It is admitted that many who appear to bring up their children religiously are afflicted by seeing them turn out badly, but per-

haps we should not be at a loss for the reason of this did we constantly live in the family. We might then witness defects, as it regards the matter of example and treatment, which we are now far from suspecting. Besides, how do we know that these parents are incessantly praying for their children, and are exercising that faith in the covenant which is required? However intimate may be our acquaintance with religious parents who are disappointed in their children, we cannot see their inner state as God sees it, and we are not competent to say that they are just the parents to whom the promise applies.

It is also admitted that sometimes the children of unfaithful parents are lovely in their childhood, and even in early life become consistent members of the church. But God has nowhere in his word taught us that he will never show mercy to those having such parents. Is he not constantly surprising us by manifestations of his loving-kindness to the unfaithful? It is true—and it is a cause for unspeakable gratitude—“that a large proportion of the children of God’s people, even under the most inadequate nurture, ultimately, and for the most part in early life, give

such evidence of piety that they are admitted to the Lord's Supper on a credible profession. The proportion is still greater—immensely greater—in churches which preserve unimpaired the true idea of the *status* of baptized children, and also keep up the high standard of evangelical truth and piety.”\*

In order that we may be in the position which will qualify us to bring up our little ones in the nurture of *the Lord*, we must hold the scriptural idea of their position insisted on in the above quotation, for the views which are held of their relation to the church, necessarily determine the question of the manner in which they shall be instructed and trained. Unless we look upon them and act toward them as heirs of the grace of life, as members of the visible Church in consequence of our being members, as belonging to God, as federally holy, *our whole manner toward them in our training of them* will be shaped by the opposite view of their position, and so we shall fail to obey the injunction to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

\* Dr. Atwater's *Children of the Church*. Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

These are some of the parental duties which, if we greatly prize God's covenant promise with reference to our children, we shall earnestly desire and endeavor to perform. Let us now, in as few words as possible, consider—

THE EFFECT WHICH THIS PROMISE SHOULD  
HAVE UPON US.

1. The new creation of a soul by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, is inconceivably more wonderful than the creation of a world out of nothing. That God is able, therefore, to promise us the regeneration of our children, should have the effect of calling forth our adoring wonder.

2. Another effect which this promise should have upon us, is that of allaying parental fears and giving us comfort. Perhaps we dread to have our little ones grow up to maturity when we look around us and see what multitudes become in mature life careless of religion, salvation, eternity, “and bad and wretched themselves and causes of what is bad and wretched around them.” But here is God's kind promise to assure us that our own shall

turn out well and be for ever saved, if we train them up in the way they should go.

3. The promise should stimulate us to exertion. Our efforts to bring about any result must necessarily be feeble if our hopes of success are faint. It is only when we can be hopeful that we can toil cheerfully and persevere. Some, not feeling the stimulus of encouragement in the work, perform parental duties fitfully and languidly. They have never been in the habit of looking upon their children as having any particular interest in the promises of the covenant. They expect their children, as a matter of course, to be converted, *if at all*, after arriving at the years of discretion. They have no faith to animate their prayers or to give vigor to their efforts. But let *us* believe—let us have faith in covenant promises—and we shall experience the happy effect which such faith will have upon us in making us diligent in our efforts to promote the spiritual good of our children.

4. When God gave us this promise, it was with the design that we should plead it. He is therefore grieved if, when we pray for our little ones, we do not remind him of

it. How many fathers and mothers have often prayed sincerely for their children without ever once presenting to God his own gracious promise! How strange that they should so constantly forget to do it! Let us learn from Israel and Moses and other saints of old how to pray, for *they* pleaded the promises.

5. The liveliest gratitude to God for his tender sympathy with us should be excited in our hearts. He knows the tender and anxious love of parents, and his promise shows that he feels and cares for them. He sees that they long to have their offspring saved, and therefore he says, "Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth the covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

6. We should often talk with our children about this promise. If we permit them to remain in ignorance of it, we displease God. They need the encouragement which the promise gives, no less than we do. "We should endeavor by our habitual spirit, by our example, prayers and

instruction, to lead them cordially to consent to the covenant within which they are by birth included. We should awaken in them the consciousness of their peculiar relation to God. We should remind them that God has made promises to them which he has made to no others, and that both their privileges and responsibilities are peculiarly great." We may then hope that they will claim God as their God, while they will not be ignorant of the truth that their right to do so is founded, not on their freedom from sin and condemnation, but solely on the promise of God in the covenant of grace.

7. We should let our minds dwell daily on the infinite good which the promise secures for our children. It secures for them deliverance from Satan, the forgiveness of all their sins, adoption, justification, sanctification and eternal life. Its fulfillment will make them possessors of everything worth having. In all things they will be conquerors through Him that loved them.

8. When we see that our children have been converted to God beyond all doubt, and when it is evident to us that they are

growing in grace, we should not be satisfied with feeling grateful in our hearts, but we should thank God with our lips, and that often, for his faithfulness in fulfilling his kind promise.

9. We should be much impressed by the thought that, provided our faith in God's covenant is very strong, the effects of our faith will be far-reaching, and will be felt long after we are dead. If our faith is vigorous, and if its strength is evinced by the manner in which we train up our little ones, then, when these become parents, they too will strongly grasp the promise, so that *their* children will be the blessed of the Lord. It is almost certain that our views of the covenant, and our conduct as parents in reference to it, will decide what even our distant descendants are to be, and what kind of influence in the world those descendants will exert.

10. The promise should not merely be looked upon in its relation to ourselves personally, but we should consider that it indicates God's plan of building up the Church. We should desire that a knowledge of the great truth which it teaches as



to the divine method of establishing Christ's kingdom in the world should be widely diffused and acted on. Even those who are not parents themselves, but who love the Saviour and his cause, should be deeply interested in the promise, and all classes of Christians grieving that it is so little understood, and is so neglected, should earnestly pray that it may receive the attention of those who now disregard it. Ministers of the gospel should have much to say concerning it in their preaching, and should seek to make their hearers familiar with it. "The covenant relation of the children of believers to God, and the divinely-constituted connection between the faith, and faithful training on the part of parents, and the salvation of their children, is a truth to which the attention of the Church needs to be directed in this age, in which an opposite spirit so generally prevails."

The church pledges her members who sustain the parental relation her assistance and sympathy in the arduous work they have to perform. She promises to combine her faith and importunity with theirs, in pleading God's covenant engagement. God expects

this of her. He requires *her*, no less than the parent, to take hold of his covenant: "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."

But besides pleading with faith in conjunction with their parents for the children born within her pale, she has other duties to perform for them; and touching these duties we wish to say a few words before concluding.

She is bound to consider them as under her government and inspection from beginning to end, and she is bound to give them instruction. It is to the church that the Saviour said, "Feed my lambs." Sabbath-schools, priceless as they are, do not bind the children to the church like ecclesiastical instruction tenderly and kindly given—instruction regularly and carefully imparted both by the pastor and the elders. "We are afraid," said the great and good Dr. Archibald Alexander, "that pastors have become remiss in this part of their duty from the mistaken idea that their labors in this field are now superseded. This mistake should be carefully counteracted; and while the benefits of Sunday-schools are grate-

fully acknowledged, the instruction of our youth in the catechisms of our own Church should be pursued with increasing diligence."

He also says: "The business of catechising youth seems also to be one of the appropriate duties of the eldership, for surely these officers ought not to be restricted to mere matters of order and government. As leaders of the people they should go before them in religious instruction; and it would be an expedient, as it is a common, arrangement to have each parish so divided into districts that every elder would have a little charge of his own to look after, the families within which he might frequently visit, and where he might frequently collect and catechise the youth. If ruling elders are commonly incompetent to perform such a work as this, they are unfit for the office which they hold, and can be of little service in the church in other respects. It is now becoming matter of common complaint that our ruling elders are not generally sensible of the important duties which belong to their office, and are not well qualified to perform them. But how can the evil be remedied? We answer that the effectual remedy will be found in an

increased attention to instruction in the *doctrines* of the Church, by which means many will acquire a taste and thirst for religious knowledge; and whenever this occurs, there will be rapid progress in the acquisition of such a fund of sound theology as will qualify them to communicate instruction to the young and ignorant. In the mean time, let every pastor meet with the elders of his church once in the week for the express purpose of discussing questions which relate to the duties belonging to their office, and thus those who are really desirous of executing their office in a faithful and intelligent manner will become better prepared for their important work every year."

Every one must see in the institution of the Sabbath-school a special manifestation of God's love and tender pity for children outside of the pale of the visible Church, but the children of the covenant are in a peculiar sense under the charge of the officers of the church. They are solemnly bound to manifest a sincere and tender interest in them and to seek to render them conscious of their church relations, and certainly it is their duty to give them doctrinal instruction as

they are able to receive it. If, however, the elders come short of their duty to the young, pastors should be diligent in meeting, catechising and exhorting them as children of the church. Indeed, under no circumstances will a pastor neglect regular catechising if he labors faithfully in the word and doctrine. "It is an error to study the Bible without generalizing its teachings and acquiring some conception of it as a whole," but even persons who have passed the age of childhood require the assistance and instructions of the pastor in generalizing the teachings of the Scriptures. If more pains were taken to explain the doctrines of the Bible to those who are still children, and to illustrate them in a way adapted to their capacity, we should doubtless be surprised at the power of comprehending us which they would evince. "It is often asserted that it is impossible for children to understand the Creed. . . . The difficulty lies rather in the teacher than in the capacity of the pupil or in the intrinsic nature of the doctrine. *He* has only a vague and general apprehension of revealed truth, and has never trained himself to make luminous and exact statements of it. Any

clergyman who is master of Christian theology, and who himself thoroughly understands the Creed and catechism, will be able to make the youth of his congregation understand it also, as others have done before him. . . . In a long pastorate the people become indoctrinated as a matter of course, in case the pastor begins to catechise at the opening of his ministry."

The people ought to become at least *some-what* indoctrinated through the labors of the pastor even though his pastorate is not very long. It is our belief that many good Christians—men by no means wanting in culture—lament their ignorance of the *doctrines* of the Bible, and sincerely wish that as regards these doctrines their pastors would guide and instruct them. "A preacher is not a mere exhorter, but a διδάσκαλος. TEACHING is his peculiar *official* duty."

Ecclesiastical instruction imparted to the young in the way above pointed out, is all the more necessary, since experience has seemed to show that it is impossible for us to have schools and academies under the care of the Church. For the efforts made some years ago to establish them proved utterly

unsuccessful,\* and the problem still remains to be solved how the children of the Church and the youth of our country are to be really religiously educated. Can it be possible that the anxiety on this subject which not many years ago was so extensively felt in the Church has entirely died away? Is it no longer believed by any one that education should be religious—that religion should be a regular part of the course of instruction in all our non-professional educational institutions? Have we now found out that we may harmlessly and without opposing any command of God entirely banish religion from the place of education? Then we have made a discovery which somehow our fathers never made, for they, it would seem, “never imagined it possible to educate *their* children apart from the supreme object of making them intelligent and faithful Christians *by means of* their educational instruction and discipline. And this was the view of education substantially which was held by the primitive Christians. They counted with assured certainty upon their retaining by *this*

\* We refer to Dr. Van Rensselaer's efforts and those of his coadjutors.

means all their children under the saving influences of the covenant. We have the best evidence that among them it was a matter of as confident expectation that all their children would be Christians, as it ever was among the Jews that all their children would be Jews. This principle gave form and efficiency to the educational institutions of Christian countries from the time of the apostles and the Alexandrian academy, under the great Origen, to the Reformation, and from the Reformation until within the memory almost, of some who are now living.”\*

Were we as consistent as are the millions of Mohammed’s followers and many heathen nations, we should make the Bible, *which we profess to believe came from God*, the very groundwork and text-book of all education. The Koran is the sacred book of the Mohammedans, and they act as if they sincerely so regarded it. Notwithstanding the literature which they possess in their books of poetry, of romance and of history, and in their original and translated works, they teach the Koran so assiduously to their children and

\* See Dr. McIlvaine’s article on “Covenant Education” in the *Princeton Review* for April, 1861.



youth that its influence is diffused through every department of society and its spirit and precepts are practically regarded. We are therefore shamed by the very heathen and Mohammedans in neglecting as we do to use the word of God as an instrument of education. It *must* be so used if our holy religion is ever to take hold of the public mind.

But whether we can justly charge the Church with neglecting her duty or not in failing to have under her care schools and academies, the fact remains that she is not making use of such educational institutions for the purpose of religiously educating her children, and therefore, as was said, pastors have all the more reason to be exceedingly diligent in attending to the catechetical instruction of the children and youth. Were they generally faithful in the performance of this duty, who can estimate the blessed results which would follow? Dr. Shedd, in the last chapter of his splendid work on homiletics and pastoral theology, considers the influence of catechising on the congregation. He says (each of these points is admirably handled) that catechising the children and

youth results even in the indoctrination of the adults; that it protects the youth against infidelity and spurious philosophy; that it promotes a better understanding of the word of God in the congregation; that it renders the youth more intelligent hearers of preaching; that it induces seriousness among the youthful part of the congregation; that it results in frequent conversions; and that it results in *genuine* conversions.

THE END.











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